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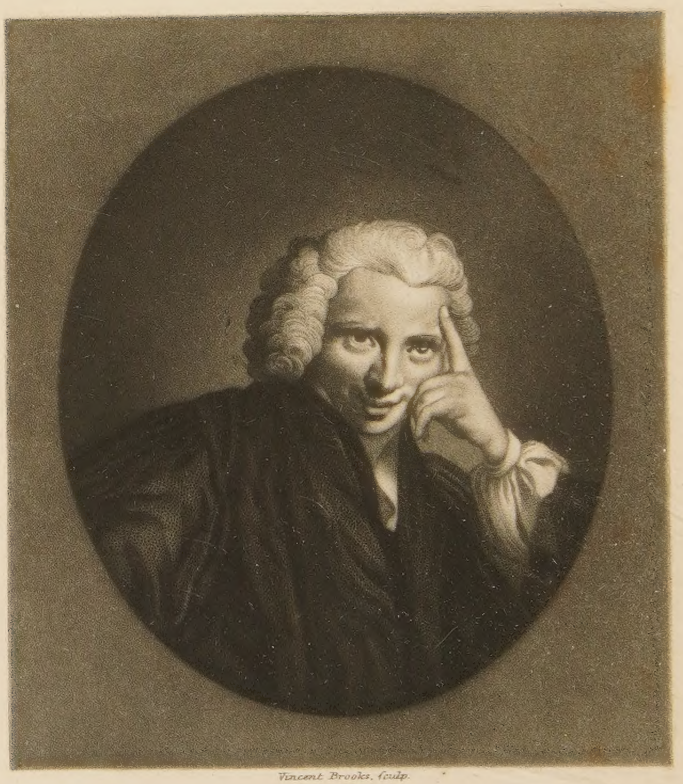
THE LIFE

OF

LAURENCE STERNE.



Vincent Brooks, Sculp.

L. Sterne

London: Chapman & Hall, 193, Piccadilly, W.

THE LIFE

OF

LAURENCE STERNE.

BY

PERCY FITZGERALD, M.A., M.R.I.A.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DRAWINGS BY THE AUTHOR AND OTHERS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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LONDON:
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

Inscribed

WITH GREAT REGARD

TO

JOHN FORSTER,

THE BIOGRAPHER OF

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

PREFACE.

In the present volumes will be found the first "Life" of Sterne that has been put before the world. Essays, articles, and sketches, there have been; but nothing approaching the proportions to which a character like Sterne's, and a history like Sterne's, are entitled. That character is so strange, and that history so odd, so dramatic, and so truly Shandean, that both together seem to work out one of the most curious biographical stories in English literature.

As regards materials, the present Life is, I may say, wholly new—new, in some twenty letters never before published—new, in many letters which, though printed, have been scattered over the wild prairies of contemporary newspapers, and magazines without indexes—new, in extracts from registers and minute-books—new, in numberless traits and facts buried in obscure memoirs of his day. Above all, unexpected light has been thrown upon Sterne's character, and many little incidents in his life, by a diligent study of his own writings. I cannot hope that all will accept the special view of Sterne's nature here presented, or will admit that the thesis

set out in the first few pages, has been satisfactorily proved. One merit, at least, I may fairly claim—that of diligence and research; and if, after all, the Life of Sterne yet remains to be written, there will be found here a fair store of materials for a more skilful workman. The assistance I have received from all sides has been cordial and generous; but, from Yorkshire—Sterne's own county—has come the most substantial aid. Every one was eager to assist—as though anxious to have part in what might help to clear the name of their great countryman. No one seemed to spare himself in the labour of search, inquiry, or transcription.

For an abundance of family traditions and details, I have to acknowledge large obligations to Francis Rawdon Carroll, Esq., of Thorpe Arch, Yorkshire. I have also to thank Mr. Hudson, of York, for permission to use a series of some fourteen original letters of Sterne's. To Sir George Wombwell, Bart., of Newburgh, I am indebted for the two characteristic letters to Lord Falconberg: as well as to Mr. Hoggard, of York, for the three addressed to Archbishop Drummond.

The Rev. James Wake, Sterne's successor at Sutton, has helped the work with both pen and pencil. It owes to him the extracts from the parish register, and the drawing of Sutton village. I have also been assisted by my friend Sir Bernard Burke; by the Rev. Dr. Corrie, Master of Jesus College, Cambridge; the Rev. George Scott; the Head-Master of Halifax Free School; by Mr.

William Durrant Cooper, F.S.A.; by my friend, Mr. Edmund Waterton, F.S.A.; by Dr. O'Donovan; the Rev. Mr. Heyman, and many more. Above all, I have to acknowledge assistance of the most valuable literary kind from the Rev. Whitwell Elwin, the accomplished editor of the *Quarterly Review*,—himself the author of the most discriminating and refined criticism on "Tristram Shandy" that has appeared in the English language.

The lecture on Sterne, left by the late Mr. Thackeray, is perhaps the most familiar of the few portraits that have been taken of the English Humourist. It is in the writer's happiest manner; written in clear, vigorous English; and full of fine irony and caustic satire. As an opening, too, for unmasking what seemed methodised hypocrisy and false sentiment, it fell within a class of subject that was exactly suited to his style and powers.

Yet while all admired the force of this tremendous exposure, there was heard a sound of subdued dissent, and even a sort of grieved protest. The revolting picture of "the mountebank," who "snivelled" over the dead donkey of Nampont, and expended his "cheap dribble" upon "an old cab," came upon the world as a surprise. An amount of weakness and of sad folly, and perhaps of grave moral failing, was to be looked for; but this gross and odious character now held up to scorn, did seem almost out of nature. Still, so little was known about the life of the writer of "Tristram," that the harsh portrait was suffered to pass—was almost

accepted. But it was yet more startling to hear from the same lips—in reference to intellectual powers hitherto not questioned—"the man is a great jester, not a great humourist;" and this from one who was himself a great humourist, and not a great jester.

In these volumes I have put forward an opposite view of Sterne's life and character. Perhaps it will be thought, as he himself put it of the old *désobligeante*, that "much, indeed, was not to be said for it, but a little might." Yet there is, in the present case, nearly the same inducement that tempted Mr. Sterne himself to plead for the famous little carriage; and when a few words will "rescue misery out of distress, I hate a man who can be a churl of them." I now venture to appeal from that hasty condemnation, a judgment which that skilful hand—now, unhappily, to write no more—would have been manly enough, in the presence of fresh facts, to erase.

In conclusion, I must ask indulgence for but too many shortcomings. Looking back, too, on what I have done, I am conscious of a more wholesale advocacy than perhaps I intended. But for this I would ask a kindly margin of allowance. We come to know writers of Sterne's class almost like friends. Like dear friends they are so natural, so free of speech, and confidential, and their lives and their writings are so mixed together, that it is hard not to be grieved and warm in their defence, when we see them lying under calumny and undeserved reproach.

P. F.

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ERRATUM.

Vol. I., page 17, line 25, *for* "Sir Roger," *read* "Roger."

BOOK THE FIRST.

THE STERNES.

THE

LIFE OF LAURENCE STERNE.

BOOK THE FIRST—THE STERNES.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

INTRODUCTION.

The accounts of Sterne's life that have hitherto been presented to the public seem at most to be mere outlines—the scaffolding and bare poles of a life, rather than the rich and fully-furnished memoir, which it is the function of the age to allot to every British worthy, of whatever calibre. No one has hitherto written the Life—and, it may be added, Adventures—of one who, beyond discussion, holds a foremost place in the great gallery of English Humorists, and who, during his life, was complimented with the name of the English Rabelais.

Where so many mute untitled mediocrities have been glorified with a biography, and the most ordinary brother, who has lived at all with decency and respectability, has his chronicler ready to come and measure

him for his Memoir, almost as surely as his undertaker will come and measure him for his coffin, it *is* very surprising that a man of the mark of the Reverend Laurence Sterne should have escaped this common tribute for so long a space as nearly one hundred years.

How are we to account for this exemption from the common lot, when every biographical subject is struggled for and seized on, much as were the passengers of Mr. Sterne's day when landing at Calais and bound for Dessein's Hotel? One reason, perhaps, was a belief that nothing was known, or could be known, about his life—nothing, at least, that could be expanded into full and respectable volumes. Another more weighty reason was, that the ground was delicate, and that any lifting of the veil would discover matter too dangerous to be set before the public. From both these causes—how unsubstantial it is hoped the following Memoir will show—his memory has suffered cruelly.

The popular view—the figure of Sterne in the stereoscope, as it may be called—is that of an abandoned clergyman, free of manners, gross in speech and writings; a Joseph Surface in orders; a false, whining, and canting parson, who sold his sentiment to the booksellers; a cold, unfeeling, heartless "mountebank," that whimpered over a dead donkey but left his mother to starve; a cruel and neglectful husband, a cold father, and a hollow friend; one that corrupted his age with a foul stream of written impurity, and poured out his corruption upon a

spotless and reluctant generation;—in short, "the foul satyr," "the coward," "the wretched worn-out old scamp," "the feeble wretch," and "mountebank;" as, indeed, he has been painted in the vigorous language of one of the best masters of English of our day. It is scarcely exaggeration to say that this is the *carte-de-visite* of Sterne that is best known and most familiar to the world. On the questions arising out of Sterne's morals and manners, and writings, I have not ventured to pass any very decided judgment, merely submitting to the reader's consideration such facts as seem to have proper weight. It will, at least, be conceded that in this respect there has been great exaggeration. But on other questions—the questions whether his sentiment was false and mere tinsel, whether his nature was kindly, genial, generous—I *have* ventured to offer a decided opinion—an opinion in which I dare to hope that those who shall kindly accompany me to the end of this narrative will join.

The curious student, seeking information as to how this eccentric lived, and for that special key to a man's works which is hung up only on one of the innumerable pegs and hooks which line the passages of his life, must hunt up the encyclopædias and dictionaries for a bare column or two, which the new dictionary has filched from the old encyclopædia, and which the newer encyclopædia has helped itself to from the older dictionary. He will, indeed, light on an excellent discriminative sketch by M. Walcknaer,

in the wonderful and confounding roll of memoirs known as the "Biographie Universelle"—a monument of that special combination of enormous canvas and miniature details in which Frenchmen, and Frenchmen alone, excel. It is critical, philosophical, and galvanizes the hitherto dry bones with true French spirit; yet it is but a very brief article. In this magazine and that, he will light on a stray paper or two—curiously exact reproductions of each other. There is the vigorous and, it must be said, cruel sketch of the author of "Esmond," full of scathing satire and dramatic effects, to reach which but too many other things have been unhappily sacrificed; with which may be contrasted an admirable *Quarterly Review* article, written in a true spirit of genial appreciation, yet not without a calm critical severity—a memoir full of information and happy points of illustration. The best of all the memoirs now existing are the three or four short pages which he himself had "set down for my daughter Lydia," and which are sprinkled plentifully with the dashes and interjections and customary spasmodics of the writer. Lively, graphic, and full of particulars, and thoroughly Shandean all the while, it remains the basis for all other more expanded accounts.

Anyone who would desire to call up and vivify that "cadaverous bale of goods," as he styled, a few months before his dissolution, his curious figure, with a grim irony; or who would see the odd "Yorkshire Parson," with his blunted features, his sunken chest (where bloodvessels were periodically

breaking), his quips and humours, must grope for himself through piles of literature contemporary with the deceased clergyman, and thus piece together for himself, with much trouble and difficulty, a kind of insufficient image. He will have to bore into the massive quartos wherein are accumulated Garrick's letters; he will have to extract a page from Warburton, a sentence here and there from Walpole, a line or two from Boswell, and, possibly, shower over all profuse sprinklings from the *Gentleman's Magazine* and the *London Chronicle*. He will have to group *tableaux vivans*, wherein Jack Wilkes, Lord Sandwich, Crebillon the Son, the Reverend Edward Lascelles, the notorious John Hall Stevenson, and Charles Townshend are the more conspicuous undraped figures. And behind them he will have to paint, with suitable scenery and decorations, London in all its racketing exactly a century ago, with those dinners to which our clergyman was engaged a fortnight deep—the parties, ridottos, and Soho festivals, under the questionable direction of Mrs. Cornelys: then shift the stage on to the Old Post-Roads of France—to the grim, sandy, sea-blown square of Calais, where Dessein took him out to show him the famous chaise—to Montreuil and Amiens, the very ring of which words, at this day, when chaunted loudly by the blue-frocked porters of the Great Northern Railway, stirs up all the notes and music of that "Sentimental Journey." He must reconstruct Paris too—the Paris of one hundred years ago, picturesque yet dirty; full of blind

alleys and dark winding streets, overflowing with the finest ladies and gentlemen in the world, clad in the "bright clean scarlet coat," and "handsome blue-satin waistcoat, embroidered fancifully enough;" together with "muslin ruffles, *bien brodées*," which, it will be recollected, was the secondhand suit which he gave La Fleur the four *louis-d'ors* to purchase in the *Rue de Friperie;*—the Paris, too, where the "young Count de Faineant" remarked how Mr. Sterne's "*solitaire*" was "pinned too straight about" his neck, and which should be "*plus badinant*," the Count said, looking down upon his own;—the Paris, too, where there were the little infidel dinners with the Baron d'Holbach, and Diderot, and other pleasant freethinkers; where Deism was highly fashionable among fine ladies and gentlemen; and where the Sybarite Louis, with his flowing periwig, was as a sort of god—a rather dissolute divinity in truth, but still a being of tremendous power. Then we must hurry down the post-roads of France, through the rich pastoral country and the luscious wine-districts, which even now have a strange old-fashioned look, and are inconsistent with the express-train running wild through the land: then on by rough roads, changing horses at lonely *auberges*—where odd postilions in shining glaze-hats, and white wool-wigs, and enormous jackboots like leather pails, come tramping forth, leading stout, round-flanked, white-speckled Normandy horses, with pink nostrils (very fierce and plunging brutes)—then struggling over the mountains into Italy, and on

to Turin, where are all the English on their Grand Tour. Round the lank Yorkshire parson congregate many gay figures; behind him are set many lively pictures. These are the agreeable *plaisaunces* we must explore for anything like a reproduction of the life of the Reverend Laurence Sterne.

Above all, from a careful study of his own books may be gathered some sufficient knowledge of his life and character—of that poor, cruelly and ungraciously-handled character, which had so many weaknesses but so many more redeeming features. For the true direction in which to look for points of character, and facts, lies on the surface of an author's writings: a "working" which was never so happily turned to profit as in Mr. Forster's admirable "Life of Oliver Goldsmith."

For scenery, then, and incidents—and taking into account also that wild streak of erratic humour, which coursed in zigzag shape all through his curious Shandean existence — the life of the Reverend Laurence Sterne has something singularly irregular and attractive. All these Zingari and Bohemians of society, the Sheridans and Goldsmiths—who borrow and spend and pay no man, and feast and make merry, and yet repay all by their wild snatches and oddities and witty turns—have an indescribable charm of their own. We would not surely have them decent, orderly, taxpaying members of society: such sobrieties would have spoiled them utterly. Does it not

seem far better that Goldsmith should have died in debt two thousand pounds, and "been trusted as poet never was before;" that Mr. Filby the fashionable tailor's account, for the famous bloom-coloured suit, should be unpaid to this hour; that Sheridan should not merely have put off hostile and truculent duns, but have actually, by inimitable persuasion, coaxed out of them almost as much again as they came to demand—rather than that our nation should have been deprived of the precious roll of these wild lives and incidents? The unhappy sufferers are really benefactors to their country, and may be taken to have presented those lost sums to the men and women of ages to come: those luckless debts have fructified far more handsomely than if they had been repaid in a decent, humdrum, respectable, and—it may be added—moral fashion.

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

ARCHBISHOP RICHARD.

The Sternes are supposed to have come originally out of the County of Suffolk; but there are Sternes dotted plentifully over England and Ireland. The pure Shandean Sternes (as they may be called), from whom sprung the famous Laurence, came from Suffolk into Nottingham, and from Nottingham became finally seated in Yorkshire, both at Kilvington and Elvington. There were Sternes of Cambridge (at Stow-Qui), of Buckinghamshire, of Hereford, of Nottingham, and of Norfolk, who are all considered to come of the same "stock," and who in most instances bear the same arms—"the three crosses flory," and the crest of the "cock-starling proper,"—or improper, as some will have it; possibly because his cage is to be found in the wicked "Sentimental Journey."

These Yorkshire Sternes were a ripe old county family, who are of the untitled nobility of England. Such can boast a pure and uncorrupted pedigree, a smooth unbroken descent, illustrious alliances, good prowess in field or council-chamber; a fixed unchanged root in the one spot for centuries, an

ancestral mansion (whose walls concealed hunted priests, and were battered by Cromwellians)—in short, all the true *matériel* of nobility, save patent and coronet.

But the glory of the Yorkshire Sternes was Dr. Richard Sterne, the Archbishop of York, who, like all the Sternes, had a life of adventure, and a history of his own. In one of those familiar passages which belong to Sterne's later manner, and which he, unhappily, took to be a faithful imitation of the free style of Rabelais, a little burst of family history escaped him. "This is the reason," he said, "may it please your reverences, that in all our numerous family for these four generations we count no more than one Archbishop, a Welsh Judge, some three or four Aldermen, and a single Mountebank." The Welsh Judge is not ascertainable: but it will be seen presently how numerous was the family, and how many were the Aldermen. The Mountebank is beyond mistake, for Mr. Sterne sat and was actually painted in that character: and the Archbishop was Doctor Richard Sterne, Archbishop of York, reputed the ecclesiastical glory of his family.*

The life of this prelate was stormy, and about as full of travail and painful suffering as that of his grandson—the Lieutenant Sterne, of the Marching Regiment, who was to be father to Laurence. Even when a child he had what the pleasant old

* He was born 1596; appointed Master of Jesus College, 1633; Bishop of Carlisle, 1660; translated to York, 1664; died, 1683.

Diarist, Thoresby, calls "two great Deliverances," one of which was a narrow escape in falling from a steeple when looking for daws. At Cambridge, having passed through the usual routine of inferior offices, he became Master of Jesus College: and when organs were introduced into cathedrals and churches — a change which Fuller notes in his sweet English, melodious as a rich old Dutch instrument,—Doctor Sterne presented his college with an organ, of fine tone and fulness.*

But by-and-by the University became involved in the struggle between the King and his Parliament: and the heads of the colleges, still clinging to the old divine-right creed, took part with His Majesty. The Master of Jesus was even conspicuous in his devotion. "He was active," says John Walker (writing his *Sufferings of the Clergy*), "in sending the Cambridge plate to His Majesty; for which he was seized on by Cromwell and carried in triumph to London," along with some other Royalist divines. Cromwell, it would seem, had a special aversion to him, possibly on account of what Fuller calls "the plate business," and had them "led leisurely through Bartholomew Fair, in order that they might be hooted at or stoned by the rabble rout."† Mr. John Vicar, a divine on the other side, saw or heard of this spectacle, and took quite a different view of the entry; which he con-

* History of Cambridge.

† In a variation of the account, this is put, with a quaint *naïveté* very amusing—"The scoffs and reproaches of the rabble: which he bore cheerfully, *because* he expected worse usage."

sidered to be "a most sweet and memorable return to our prayers when (on the same day, in the afternoon) a brave party of London dragooners brought to the Parliament that most mischievous viper of our Church, Dr. Wren, and also Dr. Martine, Dr. Beale, and Dr. Sterne—three very pestilent *bad birds of the same viperous brood*," and also "such ravenous vultures *and unclean* birds of prey."

This was but the beginning of their trouble: for after passing from prison to prison, and having to discharge what Dr. Sterne ruefully calls the "dry fees" of those places, they were brought down to the water's edge at Billingsgate Stairs to be set on board-ship. Even there a fellow was like to have been committed, "for saying they looked like honest men;" but another, "of the true stamp," reviled them, and prayed that they might break their necks as they went down to take the water.

The vessel was an Ipswich collier, of small tonnage and miserable accommodation; she was called *The Prosperous Sailer*. The space between-decks was so contracted that standing upright or walking about became impossible. On board this craft nearly sixty persons—gentlemen of good condition and many Doctors of Divinity,—were hurried, with a view, it is insinuated, of selling them for slaves upon the Algerian coast; and for ten days they suffered all manner of hardships. They were not allowed bedding, were exposed to wind and

rain; and when it was fair weather, they were "sweltered with heat and stifled with their own breaths." This misery endured for ten days.

Dr. Sterne was allowed, however, to attend his friend and patron, Laud, upon the scaffold, was set free eventually, and suffered to live obscurely in the country keeping a small school near Stevenedge, in Hertfordshire. Finally, the clouds broke, and the sunshine of the Restoration came at last; the persecuted Master of Jesus became Bishop of Carlisle, and in four years was justly translated to the archiepiscopal throne of York, in the room of the prelate who bore the quaint name of Dr. Accepted Frewen. His life was associated with various works and charities. To his old college he gave an endowment of forty pounds a year for four scholarships; and he contributed handsomely to the rebuilding of St. Paul's Cathedral. One chronicler was impressed by the fact that he had added the new buildings at the end of the stable, and also the laundry-house, to his Palace at Bishopsthorpe; and another records how "one Stearn, a solid scholar," counted up the three thousand six hundred faults that were in the printed Bibles of London. He assisted in the revision of the Book of Common Prayer; wrote a book of Logic, and some Latin Poems; and has been named, though upon weak foundation, as the author of that Junius of sacred literature, "The Whole Duty of Man." Evelyn had heard his name mentioned in connection with it, but

the evidence does not amount to more than that he had a manuscript copy in his possession.*

About his character—in spite of the glowing eulogium upon his tomb—men seemed divided. He was said to have dealt strictly with the Nonconformists, even as they had done with him; and Richard Baxter, who had seen and spoken with him, describes him sorrily: "Among all the Bishops there were none who had so promising a face . . . . . but he had not half the charity which became so grave a Bishop, nor so mortified an aspect." And Burnet writes his epitaph with true theological bitterness. "Sterne died," he says, "in the eighty-sixth year of his age. He was a sour, ill-tempered divine, and minded chiefly the enriching of his family. He was suspected of Popery." The first of these charges seems to have been the most substantial of all brought against him, for he left to his son Richard a fine Yorkshire estate; and a cathedral antiquary gravely censures him for the same, saying "*that* did not atone for his demising Hexgrave in Nottingham to his son, Mr. Stearn, and to his son's wife." At last, in the year 1683, he died, and was laid under the great nave-window of his own cathedral, where he may be now seen in marble robes reclining upon his hand, under a gorgeous canopy set up by his son Richard. Little Laurence, hereafter living close to York, was likely to have been often taken to see

* The whole of this curious controversy is acutely discussed in one of the older volumes of the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

this memorial, and instructed in the glories of his ecclesiastical ancestor.*

At Farnborough—where, not long since, the two champion gladiators had their struggle for the brutal glories of the Ring—reposes Mrs. Sterne, "wife of the above." She was a Dickinson, and was laid with her own family. A not ungrateful epitaph chaunts her praises in sonorous Latin, and tells how she was *filia, conjux, et mater pientissima*, and that she was fifty-three years old when she died. She was laid with her own family: but the Archbishop had a favourite daughter (Anne), who, as her epitaph puts it, went to join the choir of virgins at a too early age, and whose tomb may be seen in the great Minster, not far away from the stately memorial of her father.

This dignitary was not the sole glory of the family. The Sternes were well fortified with connections and alliances of good blood. Placing Laurence Sterne in the centre, it is surprising what a crowd of figures of good quality group themselves thickly about him—Listers, Fairfaxes, Rawdons, and Pallisers. These were good names: but, perhaps, the best of all the Sterne connections were the Rawdons of Rawdon, a family of true English squires.

From John Rawdon of Guisely, who was alive in York about the year 1500, sprung two branches, an elder and a younger. The elder line was rich in

* See Le Neve's "History of the Protestant Bishops;" and the simple, but evidently partial, narrative of Walker ("Sufferings of the Clergy").

knights, baronets, and gallant soldiers, and also in fair alliances;—the Sir John of 1665 marrying Lord Conway's daughter, and his son, Sir Arthur, the granddaughter of the Earl of Monteath. And the family becoming Irish, by long settlement, Sir Arthur's grandson came to be Earl of Moira; and made no less than three distinguished alliances, with the daughters of Lords Egmont, Hillsborough, and Hastings successively. Greater heraldic glories were, however, reserved for the son of one of marriages, the famous Indian Earl of Moira and Marquis of Hastings, whose deeds are still fresh. His father received his Irish earldom when "Tristram," the new book, was the talk of the town; so that Mr. Sterne, then engaged a fortnight deep to noble persons, might have spoken of his cousin the new Earl.

But for the second branch—the younger son's—was reserved a more remarkable distinction. Civic honours were showered thickly on this line—the younger son's grandson being sheriff and alderman ("he would certainly," the chronicle tells us, "have been lord-mayor had he not died"), and a person of great consideration in York. One of the alderman's children was Marmaduke — the "Duke" Rawdon whose name was long cherished in that City. How an English gentleman of that day travelled and feasted—how he journeyed courageously to the Canaries for wines—how he was always "naturally averse to marriage, and sometimes, dreaming he was married, wept in his sleep

very much" — how he declined the daughter of "The Lord Langdale," and the three sisters to "My Lord Falconbridge" (whose descendant was Sterne's best friend and patron)—how he built the York Cross, and left a gold-chain of sixteen ounces to the Lady Mayoress of York for the time being; —this, and much more, may be all read in the pleasant memoir, written in delightfully quaint English, which has been left us of his life.*

The tombs of the Rawdon family are clustered thickly in an ancient York church, bearing the antique name of St. Crux. There Laurence Rawdon "lies buried," says the old heraldic chronicle, very sweetly, "in the chancel, under a fair blue marble-stone." And in the same church lies Mrs. Eliza Dawson, for whom a certain young Mr. Roger Jaques had been a knight and hero; for she is laid, says her epitaph, "near Mr. Roger Jaques, *whom she loved.*"

A sister of "Duke" Rawdon, named Mary, was married, when only seventeen years old, to a wealthy civic knight, Sir Roger Jaques, who *had* lived to wear the Lord Mayor's gold-chain, and who owned the fair estate of Elvington, outside York. Their son, Sir Roger, had a son (also called Roger), and a daughter Mary. The son died, and the daughter became a Yorkshire heiress, and Mistress of Elvington. Mr. Sterne (and all his biographers fell naturally into the same mistake) imagined that his grandmother was Sir Roger's *daughter*. Mr. Simon

* Recently published by the Camden Society.

Sterne, son to the Lord Archbishop of York, won this lady's hand; and their child, Roger, was the father of LAURENCE STERNE.

It must have been in honour of the Laurence who, had he lived, *might* have been Lord Mayor, that his parents gave Laurence Sterne his name. In the Jaques family, as we have seen, was a generation of Rogers. It was natural, therefore, that Mary Jaques, an heiress, should baptise one of her children by that family name. And Mr. Sterne was surely thinking of his mother's family when he made Trim cut up into mortars the great jackboots which Sir Roger Shandy wore at the Battle of Marston Moor.

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

THE IRISH STERNES.

There were also Irish Sternes, who no doubt came of the old Nottingham stock. The Irish Sternes, whose name fluttered unsteadily between a contracted "Stern" and "Stearne" of a fuller sound, took also an ecclesiastical and even episcopal hue, and may be easily traced up to the old Cambridgeshire stock, from which, it is believed, Laurence's Yorkshire branch also came. Up to the beginning of the present century the Irish Episcopal Bench was kept as a pleasant pasture and strict monopoly for English clergymen with tolerable interest; just as what was called "a pension on the Irish Establishment" became a suitable provision for ladies of fair figure and easy manners. And though it is a matter of congratulation that such men as Percy and Jeremy Taylor have been placed on this acceptable foundation, still the practice has not been found very beneficial.

In this episcopal exodus came out one Theophilus Buckworth, appointed to the See of Dromore, which would appear to have been the popular benefice of the day. He was of a Cambridgeshire family, and died in

the year 1652. In that county, as has been mentioned, were some of the Sterne family, one of whom (John Sterne of Sterne, in Stapleford) went to Ireland with the Bishop, in "the capacity of his officer." This gentleman became John Sterne, Esq., of Erinagh, County Down, and married a Dublin lady named Bermingham. A relative of the Bishop, Antony Buckworth, was married to a sister of the Dublin lady; and thus, besides official ties, John Sterne, Esq., was connected with the Bishop by matrimonial alliance. By this marriage the learned blood of the Usshers and that of Sterne became commingled; for Mabel Bermingham, the Dublin lady, was granddaughter of Arland Ussher, a "six-clerk" in Chancery, who was uncle to the famous primate. To John Sterne, the Bishop's "officer," was born a son, John, who came into the world at the house of his granduncle, James Usher, then Bishop of Meath. Such was an augury of excellent promise for the infant, who became a man of prodigious learning in many directions;—uniting in himself the divinity of a Doctor of Canon Law, the multifarious reading of a Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, and the healing skill of a President of the College of Physicians. In the University Chapel may be still seen "a fair mural stone," in excellent preservation, which records the honours and the virtues of this universal scholar.*

He suffered what is considered in a university

* See Mr. Gilbert's learned and entertaining History of Dublin (Vol. III., p. 15).

persecution for justice' sake—namely, deprivation of his fellowship, but was restored later. His son, Doctor John Sterne, a more notable man, was Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin, and suffered deprivation too, yet of a not unacceptable character; for the greater Dean—the sole and unique Dean whom history recognises—was growing turbulent, and it was found that some morsel of preferment should be flung to him. Therefore, in the year in which little Laurence came into the world in the barracks at Clonmel, his namesake was suffering a pleasing deprivation, yet at the same time receiving consolation from the offer of the mitre of Clogher. The terrible Dean, if he had not power sufficient to snatch a bishopric for himself, could at least have smaller men thrust into bishoprics to make room for him. This Bishop Sterne was moved to Dromore, the see which the amiable Percy was to fill hereafter, and seems to have been a generous and improving tenant; for he left memorials of himself wherever he passed, in the shape of spires, foundations, general church repair, and libraries. More notable still is he by a savage letter addressed to him by the Great Dean, in which the latter summarises his causes of complaint. The Bishop had innocently asked why he had not heard of him lately; and the other tells him why, in a paper that suggests very forcibly Johnson's famous Chesterfield letter.

Thus they had members both of the English and the Irish branch bent in the episcopal direction; and a sort of ecclesiastical strata can be traced

downwards through the family, to the days of the Reverend Laurence Sterne.

There was another Irish Sterne also—less reputable—whose name dots Swift's "Journal to Stella," and is the occasion of some of his quaintest fits of indignation and sham maledictions. This gentleman was one Enoch Sterne, Collector of the County of Wicklow, and whose blood seems to have been of the same mercurial quality as was afterwards to dance through the veins of the Shandean Laurence. He had been charged to take back from London a precious box for Mrs. Johnson, stored with stockings and other articles, which the unlucky collector lost about Chester. "The D——l burst Hawkshaw!" writes the Dean, in one of his quaint furies; "he told me he had not the box, and the next day Sterne told me he had sent it a fortnight ago . . . . whom I have befriended enough to do me more kindness than that." The box turns up a hundred times—now presented playfully, now seriously—and has thus become a piece of furniture for posterity—a box for all time, infinitely more precious than the intrinsic worth of its contents. The collector must have been wholly unsuited for such an office: "For," writes the Dean, "I saw Leigh last night, and he gives a terrible account of Sterne; he reckons he is seduced by some wench; he is over head and ears in debt, and has pawned several things."

About the year 1826, a Mr. Sterne turned up in Ireland under discreditable circumstances, as

defendant in an action for damages for running away with the wife of another Irish gentleman—an incident in itself of no very great account in this history, beyond the fact of the name of the great Shandean being dragged into the discussion in the strangest way by both judge and counsel. The damages sought from this gentleman were no less than 20,000*l.*; and the famous "Counsellor" Philips, in one of his most extravagant rhapsodies, thus alluded to the Reverend Laurence Sterne. "In short," said the barrister, sarcastically, "he was a kind of wandering philanthropist, making—like the Sterne who, he confessed, *had the honour of his name and connexion*—a 'Sentimental Journey,' in search of objects over whom his heart might weep." But to the judge, who was the notorious Jeffreys of the Irish Bench—the brutal Norbury—it came specially welcome, and he revelled in the coarse pleasantry it furnished to him. He chuckled over the many names of the defendant, who was designated "Mr. William Peter Baker Dunstanville Sterne;" and he facetiously remarked, that if he had but as many *Christian* virtues as he had Christian names, he would do very well. Then he went on in this very remarkable judicial charge: "In portraying his character, the learned counsel has, if I may use a nautical term, raked this gentleman fore and aft—from *stem* to *stern*. . . . . Gentlemen, I shall not now detain you by a repetition of the travels of the defendant and his unhappy victim; and you will think with me, that the treat-

ment the unfortunate lady received forms the most disgusting part of 'Sterne's Sentimental Journey.'" It may be added, that this unlucky representative of the name and stock of the Reverend Laurence atoned for his dereliction by over five-and-thirty years' confinement in a debtors' prison, and died only yesterday in the dismal office of Father to the Dublin Marshalsea.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

THE STERNES OF KILVINGTON.

Of the Archbishop's thirteen children, we only know five:—Squire Simon, who married the heiress of Elvington; William, of Mansfield; Richard, of York; John; and Anne, the young girl whose tomb is in the cathedral. He left them all a suitable provision: Hargrave, Mansfield, Kilvington, and Cat-beeston were estates which he divided among them.

Richard Sterne, Esq., eldest of the archiepiscopal thirteen, and uncle of the famous Priest Laurence, became Richard Sterne, Esq., of Kilvington, Yorkshire, and is mentioned with respect in the ancient books of pedigree. "He beareth," chimes out old John Guillamin, with his own quaint ring, and who, as he chants, seems to have on his herald's coat —"he beareth, *or* a chevron, three crosses flory sable, by the name of Sterne, which is the paternal coat of Richard Sterne, of Kilvington, in Yorkshire, Esq., son and heir of the Most Reverend Father-in-God Richard Sterne, Lord Archbishop of York, Primate and Metropolitan of England,

descended from a family of that name in Nottinghamshire."

For him a wife was found in Miss Mary Loveland, daughter to a Norwich Prebendary—no very great alliance for the Archbishop's son. There is preserved among the family relics a strange antique gold watch, which chimed the hours loudly like a clock, and which the Prebendary's daughter was accustomed to wear. Once, when Mr. and Mrs. Richard were at King Charles's Court, this little clock began to strike, and attracted the notice of the Queen, who said she had never heard so musical a bell.* . . Both their portraits, finely painted, are still preserved, and may be seen to this day.† This is all that is known of Squire Richard and his wife.

There was another son of the Archbishop who went into the Church, became the Rev. John Sterne, and married the sister of Sir William Gilbert. A daughter or granddaughter of theirs became connected with the Hill family, of Kilmallock, in Ireland, who thus must have been cousins to Laurence Sterne. This rivulet of the blood of the Sternes which trickled across the Channel is now represented by the Graigs of Doneraille, near Limerick.

There are dim memories of a Sterne who took the side of the Pretender, and became an earnest Jacobite—so earnest, indeed, that the Prince gave

* A family tradition. † Richard Sterne's was engraved.

him his portrait. His name has been forgotten. But we come now to the most notable of the Archbishop's children—"Roger Sterne, Lieutenant in Handasyd's Regiment," begins Mr. Sterne, telling the story of his father to his daughter Lydia. All through his life Mr. Sterne was more or less inaccurate in matters of spelling names, languages, and even in the month he would place at the head of his letters. His father was never a Lieutenant in Handasyd's, which was the Twenty-second Foot; and, it will be seen, could scarcely have been in that corps at any period of his life.* The regiment in which he really served was "Cornwallis's," or the Thirty-fourth. Lord Lucas had received a commission to raise a regiment, and in the year 1708 it halted at Leeds for some time; and it seems very likely that Roger joined its ranks at that Yorkshire town. From thence it passed over to Ostend, to take part in the great Flanders war then raging. The regiment was then under Hamilton, and its first action was the repulse of Count La Motte at Wynendale, an affair to which Captain Shandy and his corporal often alluded. They took part in the siege of Lisle, and that of Douai, where they lost a subaltern and many soldiers; incidents of which campaign are spread over the pages of "Tris-

* He might, indeed, have served previously in Handasyd's, during the Williamite wars in Ireland. But his son tells us he was a Lieutenant in the corps—which he could not have been. Handasyd's were in Jamaica when Roger Sterne was in Flanders.

tram," with a breadth and colour which could not have been supplied by books, but which Laurence's own memory must have furnished to him. He must have often sat upon his father's knee and heard the story of the Flanders wars.

BOOK THE SECOND.

LAURENCE: INFANT, SCHOOLBOY, AND COLLEGIAN.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

CHUDLEIGH'S REGIMENT IN THE FLANDERS WAR.

Our English armies were hard at work, "swearing terribly in Flanders;" and the famous fighting Duke—the greater, perhaps, of the two notable fighting Dukes who did such wonders in the field with English armies—was growing weary of beating the Maréchal de Villars, and Maréchal de Villeroi, and the Duc de Vendôme. He was actually dreaming, as Captain Shandy dreamed, of "passing the French lines"—of "breaking into the heart of France," crossing the "Oyes," and, with all Picardie open behind him, "marching up to the gates of Paris, and falling asleep with nothing but ideas of glory;" or of "fixing the Royal Standard upon the tower of the Bastille, and awake with it streaming in his hand." Indeed, it all but came about that there had been a raid on the sacred Bosquets of Versailles, and, but for a little accident, the Grand Monarque—who, though seventy-three years old, was but of the age of all the world—had been laid hold of by the profane hands of rough English hussars.

The name of the great fighting Duke was being

already barbarized into "*Malbrook*," and hummed and chanted to a quaint burden of "miranton, miranton, mirantaine!"—it was, besides, found very efficacious as a useful "bogie" for stilling "mewling" and cradle noise. In short, the Peace of Utrecht was being set in train for being "basely patched up." "Believe me, sir," young Tristram assures us, "it was the worst deed Fate did that year." Its effect on the British troops—who, even in the course of ordinary service, "swore so terribly in Flanders"—may be well conceived from the manner in which that brave and loveable officer, Captain Shandy, took it to heart. For we are assured that "Calais itself left not a deeper scar in Mary's heart than Utrecht upon my Uncle Toby's. To the end of his life he never could bear Utrecht mentioned upon any account whatever, or so much as read an article of news extracted from the *Utrecht Gazette*, without fetching a sigh as if his heart would break in twain."

But as yet the fatal treaty had not been signed. The famous fighting Duke, almost challenged by the French Maréchal to pass beyond what he boastfully called his "*ne plus ultra*," had actually succeeded in passing with Ensign Sterne's regiment, and had just gained one of the greatest of these Flanders victories without the loss of a man, and had besieged and taken Bouchain. "In a bundle of original papers and drawings," says Tristram, "which my father took care to roll up by themselves, there is a plan of Bouchain in perfect preservation (and shall

be kept so while I have power to preserve anything), which is the very plan that my Uncle Toby took care to have fastened up, with two or three pins at the top but loose at the bottom, for the conveniency of holding it up to the eye, &c." This, too, was the very map which has been sanctified by the mark of the recording thumb of delicious Mrs. Wadman, and which was used in that famous sentry episode which Leslie has reproduced with such art and freshness.

But it had for Tristram a yet nearer interest: and that ancient plan, which was to be kept so long as he had power to keep anything, was perhaps but a figurative way of recording his attachment to the scene where Mr. Sterne's father, Ensign Roger Sterne, met his mother, and to the associations of their marriage.

The whole of that delightful chronicle of the Shandy family is leavened with recollections of Queen Anne's wars. Bits of scenery and costume —the little glimpses of the Belgian towns and fortresses, the gates of St. Nicholas and of St. Andrew's, the brass fieldpieces, the glacis and counterscarps and curtains, the marching and countermarching, the rolling of the fatal *chamade* behind the ramparts—signal that another garrison had succumbed to the invincible Malbrook;—these snatches of the poetry of warfare colour the page. We have, besides, little flashes of the theatrical side of those fighting days—the military properties and decorations, which were gaudy

enough: the "Rameille tye wig," the "laced cloaths," the "thin scarlet breeches" or those of "red plush;" the "blue and gold" suit, which when not in use were laid by in the "great campaign trunk," and which were magnificently laced down the seams of the sides, &c., in the mode of King *William's* reign; and that wonderful scarlet *roquelaure* of Captain Shandy's, in which he mounted guard "in the trenches before the Gate of St. Nicholas," where he received the wound in the groin, and which lights up the whole picture like Turner's red buoy

In these days nearly all regiments were known by their colonel's name, or at least by the name of the officer who had raised the corps—just as in our own time we hear of Hodson's and Probyn's Horse, in the East Indies. Thus, in this very camp round Bouchain, were picketed my Lord Stair's Dragoons, General Stanhope's Dragoons, Sir Daniel O'Carroll's Irish Horse, and many more. Captain Shandy had served in Leven's, under King William, and the poor Lieutenant Le Fever was in Angus's; the Thirty-fourth, in which Roger Sterne had a commission, was Hamilton's—presently to be Chudleigh's.

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

THE NOTED SUTLER.

While Ensign Roger is thus busy in Flanders, he falls in with one of the great foragers or contractors, who marched with the army, and fattened on the war. This was one Nuttle, an Irish purveyor from Clonmel—a place, even down to the Great French War of this century, having a certain specialty in the army-provisioning line, and up to the present day sending away many shiploads of little smuggling-looking kegs of salted meats for our soldiers and sailors—"a noted sutler," says the Rev. Mr. Sterne, in the little memorandum of his life. "The family, if any left," he adds carelessly, "live now at Clomwel, in the South of Ireland." This was written only a few months before Mr. Sterne's death, and some sixty years after the "noted sutler" had done with Flanders and, possibly, earthly provisioning generally. But this "if any left," which Mr. Sterne did not care to resolve, we may, in our own way, happily satisfy. For down close by Clonmel were lately to be found Nuttles, who have lived and flourished there for many generations, with the name recast afresh, according to the inevitable destiny,

into Nuttall, and handsomely balanced by a superadded Greene. So it now stands Nuttall-Greene, a gentlemanly race, with, we may be sure, that provisioning streak utterly wiped out and forgotten.

The "noted sutler" had a fair daughter, Agnes, whom—following out a *rôle* not uncommon with modern army-sutlers, who do monster tailoring and moneychanging for gentlemen of the army—he had married to a Captain Hebert, or Herbert, who came (we have it on good authority) "of a good family." Rather, she was stepdaughter to the "noted sutler," that is, "his wife's daughter," according to Mr. Sterne; who yet, with a little confusion, which in matter of dates and names clung to him all his life, calls Mr. Nuttle her "father-in-law." This Nuttle had, however, a son of his own, by his second marriage, whom young Sterne seems to have known, or heard stories of; for he speaks of him as having "a fine person—but a graceless whelp." How this graceless whelp ended he was never able to learn.

Officers' ladies, it would seem, did not fear the perils and inconveniences of the campaign, but were allowed to attend their husbands even to the field. And thus it came about that poor Lieutenant Le Fever "was the Ensign at *Breda*, whose wife was most unfortunately killed with a musket as she lay in my arms in my tent. Do you so," said he, wiping his eyes with his handkerchief, "then well may I." And so out came the "little ring," tied with a black ribbon round his neck; and then is struck a deep bit of Shandean pathos, and my

Uncle Toby wishes—with a deep sigh, wishes—he was asleep. Young Roger Sterne was no more than a poor marching Ensign; but that "good family" of his, no doubt, seduced the "noted sutler" of Clonmel. The "noted sutler's" eye rested on him with approbation; for he was of good family, though with barely a sixpence. Were he, however, reluctant — this Ensign of good family —there is a gentle pressure to bring him forward. There stands a quaint pithy parenthesis after his name, yet brimming over with meaning. It is more copious than whole pages of the digressive Tristram; and yet it is no more than, "N.B.—He was in debt to him." The Clonmel provisioner allowed his addresses through the agency of bills and notes-of-hand.

On the 12th of September, 1711, the English regiments were in Bouchain, and, though not known to them, the grand Marlborough fighting days were over. For the next few weeks there came a lull. The Duke could afford to send troopers to help the illustrious author of "Telemachus" to get in his provisions, and is writing home about getting his men into quarters—"And although the weather is deplorable for some days past, which, as you must be sensible, makes us a little uneasy here," still this is the season selected for the marriage of Ensign Roger Sterne and Agnes Hebert the widow. On the 24th of September is Marlborough writing home his dismal apprehensions of the weather, and complaining sorely of the scarcity of forage and pro-

visions, which must have put the "noted sutler" to all his resources; and on the 25th the marriage took place, with the old Belgian *carillons* of Bouchain jangling out an epithalamium, which must have taken the shape of—"N.B., he was in debt to him!"

The pay of Ensign Roger Sterne, when he married, is set down at three shillings and twopence halfpenny a day; still, on this slender allowance, with what the Irish contractor could give them, he entered on his military honeymoon. The regiment, being composed of young soldiers, was put into winter-quarters; and Mrs. Roger Sterne went to live in the strongly-fortified town of "Lisle, in French Flanders," which had been in possession of the Allies. It was now all over with the pleasant music of the *chamade;* and the fighting being virtually terminated, there may have been lively doings enough within the fortified town. But all this while that "base treaty was being patched up at home," and they had got well into the year 1712 without motion: no wonder that Captain Shandy could not thereafter endure to speak of that period. "To tell thee truly, Trim, any other date would have pleased me better, on account of the sad stain upon our history that year, in marching off our troops and refusing to cover the siege of Quesnoi, though Fagel was carrying on the work with incredible vigour." And thus the victors of Malplaquet and Ramillies were forced into a dishonourable inaction; while their leader, the Duke of

Ormonde, equally against his will, "was playing the devil in Flanders."

On the 10th of July, during this lull, came into the world the first of the Shandy children—Laurence Sterne's sister, who was born at "Lisle, in French Flanders," and christened Mary: and with the entry of that child into the world the troubles of the poor marching Ensign and his lady may be said to have begun. As will be seen, the record of Mrs. Sterne's life becomes no more than a chronicle of many weary tramps after the regiment—from this quarter to that—attended with hurried carrying of newly-born infants, who would seem perversely to choose to come into the regiment when it had received "*the route*." For the old gift of a fruitful fecundity—of but doubtful profit in the case of a marching Ensign—had descended from the Archbishop to his grandchild; and henceforward the chronicle of poor Roger Sterne's life is to be no more than a record of weary journeyings and incessant parturition. We know the details of that discreditable "playing the devil in Flanders" by the Duke of Ormonde, who, brave man as he was, was with his army compelled to play an unhandsome and unchivalric part. We have read of that tearing of hair—those cries and execrations of the English soldiers—that mournful departure, with cast-down eyes, when the signal was given for the march, and desertion of the brave Eugene, and all their hard-won conquests. There were twelve thousand English on that mournful march,

who were embarked forthwith, sent home, and "broke."

It was the rather heartless policy of these times to disband an army wholesale, as soon as all fighting was over. They were dealt with as the militia-force is dealt with now: and the signature to a treaty of peace, which was joy and prosperity to the country at large, was only ruin and despair to the stout arms and hearts whose swords had brought it about. Already, while Roger Sterne is at "Lisle, in French Flanders," before the Utrecht Treaty is being "basely patched up," but while Doctor Swift is writing over to his Stella that he has supped last night with two surreptitious French envoys, many regiments have been "broke;" among others, Sir Daniel O'Carroll's Irish Dragoons, with the Earl of Stair's Scotch Horse, Colonel Desholière's Horse, General Stanhope's, and many more. But Ensign Sterne's regiment remained in Flanders until peace was formally signed in the following year.

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

LAURENCE BORN.

The Peace of Utrecht created much the same shyness between the Queen and the rest of the Confederating Powers as it did between Captain Shandy and his darling hobby-horses; for it is well known that the French rather unhandsomely attempted to take advantage of this coldness, by not rendering up Dunkirk according to the stipulations.

"The French were so backward all the summer in setting about that affair, and the deputy from the magistrates of Dunkirk presented so many affecting petitions to the Queen, beseeching Her Majesty to cause only her thunderbolts to fall upon the martial works which might have incurred her displeasure, but to spare—to spare the mole, for the mole's sake!" that the whole spring and autumn had nearly slipped away before the remaining regiments could be permitted to embark. And, probably, they followed the cautious yet skilful generalship laid out by Captain Shandy, in evacuating his horn-works and citadels in his little garden at Shandy Hall. Very likely, they began "with the outworks towards the sea and the land, and particularly with

Fort Louis, the most distant of them all; next fill up the harbour; then retire into the citadel, and blow it up into the air; and having done that, Corporal, we'll embark for England!" And, accordingly, it was not until the month of November that poor Mrs. Sterne, the Ensign's wife, found herself embarking for Dunkirk, with one child in her arms, and another to be looked for, not unreasonably, at any moment. There was a weary journey before her, by road and transport, to Clonmel, where her husband's regiment lay, which town she at last happily entered about the 20th or 21st of November. Before she had barely time to rest or recover, the famous Shandean infant—the well-known Laurence and immortal Tristram—had hurried into the world, and the scene of his birth was the Barracks of what he calls "Clonmell."* The 24th of November, 1713—the Utrecht year—is the birthday of the English Rabelais.

Mr. Sterne, moralising over this nativity many decades of years afterwards, says, sadly enough: "My birthday was ominous to my poor father, who was, the day after our arrival, with many other brave officers, broke, and sent adrift into the wide world with a wife and two children." It had been determined at the War Office that every regiment raised since the Peace of Ryswick in 1697, except two, should be "broke;" and the Thirty-fourth was in this category. As yet, however, these poor

* This odd mistake is religiously copied in most contemporary reprints.

genteel tramps are, for the moment, resting in Clonmel.

This cruel ceremonial of breaking up regiments, which treats them pretty much as though they were ships to be paid off, was persisted in steadily for some six or seven years, until the British Army was thinned down to the proportions of some ten or twelve thousand men. Amongst the brave officers who were this year "broke and sent adrift into the wide world," with Ensign Sterne's corps, were the regiments of General Primrose, of Mordaunt; Newton's, Molesworth's, Leigh's, Evans', Kane's, and my Lord Shannon's Marines. Nearly all these were Irish regiments, and "broke" in Ireland. And in Kane's we find "Ensign Murphy," happily exempted from the common lot, gratified with a pension. How welcome would that Treasury rain-shower have come to our poor Ensign, "sent adrift" with a wife and two children!

Under these circumstances, there was no help for it but a respectable leaning for support on one's near relations—a sort of decent eleemosynary support from the family. There was no profit in waiting at Clonmel: the "noted sutler" could not do much for them—possibly, was not so inclined, being by this time heartily tired of that music, "N.B.—He was in debt to him!" The only thing left was to pack the "campaigning trunk" once more, and take the road again—for Yorkshire this time.

If only half Irish by birth, it would seem that the true Hibernian wildness, which was hereafter to

supply to his writings the racy Rabelaisian flavour, was to be furnished to the Ensign's little son by a sort of forced inoculation, and to be instilled into him by an early association with Irish life and images. Cheerful and kindly faces of the bold "soldier-boys" of that nation were to look down on the infant Laurence, as his nurse took him abroad through the barrack-squares; and strong Irish arms were to shift him tenderly from transport to shore, and from shore to transport, in the course of many wanderings. And some floating memories of the men of this regiment have taken shape many, many years later, in that incomparable servant of my Uncle Toby, Corporal James Butler, but who is to be always known by his regimental sobriquet of Corporal Trim.

As soon, then, as the newly-born infant was "able to be carried" (which would be in about a fortnight), they took the road again; and embarking for England, "with the rest of his family," Ensign Sterne "came to the family seat, at Elvington, near York, where his mother lived." Mrs. Simon Sterne had long been a widow, and the sight of her children would have been welcome.* There, while they enjoy a well-earned repose of nearly a year's duration—which must have come inexpressibly sweet and grateful after all the rude campaigning in French Flanders, and the weary buffetings by sea and by land—we shall have time to take a closer glance at Ensign Roger Sterne and his character.

* In an old family deed, dated 1704, she is described as a widow.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

ENSIGN ROGER STERNE, OF CHUDLEIGH'S FOOT.

"My father," writes the son of Ensign Sterne, "was a little smart man—active, to the last degree, in all exercises—most patient of fatigue and disappointments, of which it pleased God to give him full measure. He was in his temper somewhat rapid and hasty, but of a kindly, sweet disposition; *void of all designs*, and so *innocent in his own intentions, that he suspected no one;* so that you might have cheated him ten times in a day, if nine had not been sufficient for your purpose." Can any one doubt but that this genial and spirited little sketch, which seems to overflow with a tender yearning and affection, is the original design for that larger canvas, from which stands out the richly-coloured, firmly-painted, and exquisitely-finished figure of Uncle Toby?*

There is a tenderness and yearning in this bit of unartificial writing (for it was no more than a mere scrap, filled in hurriedly for his daughter Lydia,

* Recollecting the name of Trim among the names of Shadwell's characters, I looked through his *dramatis personæ*, and found Bridget, Toby, Diego, and Eugenia—all names in the Shandy catalogue.

with all the ill-fitting joints and lameness which such haste entails) which reads very genuinely. "It came warm from the heart," as he himself was to write in one of his letters. And it requires no great penetration to guess that the same gentle images must have been rising before him while he sat at his desk in his Sutton Vicarage—suffusing his eyes and softening his heart, as he thus filled in the portrait of the brave officer, who had also served in the Flanders wars. "My Uncle Toby was a man patient of injuries, not from want of courage. I know no man under whose arm I would sooner have taken shelter. Nor did this arise from any obtuseness or insensibility of his intellectual parts. But he was of a peaceful, placid nature—no jarring elements in it; all was mixed up so kindly within him, my Uncle Toby had scarce a heart to retaliate upon a fly." Then follows the famous incident of the capture of the fly, and its subsequent happy discharge into that world which was wide enough both for itself and its captor. Contrasting the two brothers, he says that Mr. Shandy was quite the opposite of his brother "in *this patient endurance* of wrongs." The most charming touch of all was "that sweet look of goodness which sat upon my Uncle Toby's brow, and assimilated everything around it so sovereignly to itself, and nature had moreover traced gentleman with so fair a hand in every line of his countenance, that even his tarnish'd gold-laced hat and huge cockade of flimsy taffeta became him." He was ten years old, Tristram writes,

when the fly adventure happened, which might indeed have been a little incident in Ensign Sterne's life; for it is very consistent with his "kindly, sweet disposition, void of all design." But my Uncle Toby, with all this gentleness, could yet rouse himself when the occasion called for a necessary display of temper; and thus he was always in the habit of calling the Corporal "Trim, unless when he happened to be *very angry* with him."

Putting this picture beside the original, we see that Ensign Roger Sterne, with that "kindly, sweet disposition, void of all design" (words which in themselves come sweetly and melodiously off the lips), could nevertheless be "in his temper somewhat rapid and hasty." Without these little olives no human character can be complete. And for that "innocence in his own intentions," which made him "suspect no one," we have the counterpart in those delightful *mal entendus* which arise when the elder Mr. Shandy puts forward his quaint and startling theories, of which a whole existence is embraced in his simple, unsuspicious answer to Mr. Shandy's blunt question, based on a curious personification of the earthier passions of mankind; and which, it will be recollected, he was fond of typifying under the image of an ass. It breaks out, does this likeness, in innumerable little touches—hints, rather—and delicate shadowings.

Captain Shandy had that world-famous wound in his groin invested now with an interest, and even

romance, such as gunshot wound never had before. Ensign Sterne received a wound also, nearly as obstinate, and which refused to heal for nearly as long a period. The famous jackboots which the enthusiastic Corporal cut up into mortars are mourned over as having been worn by Sir Roger Shandy, great-grandfather of the family, at the Battle of Marston Moor—a cavalier, who was surely baptised Roger in memory of the real Lieutenant Sterne.

The best testimony to this dear old officer's worth comes to us from the servants'-hall—a parliament, by the way, whose united voice has some value of its own. The Corporal—whose mere *obiter dicta* are welcomed with a just respect and applause by that admiring circle, as coming from a man of parts, and who had been in the wars, and knew the world very well—has been giving his views on that little amour of his master's which was just then exciting extraordinary interest in the parish.

"I like to hear Trim's stories about the Captain," said Susannah.

"He is a kindly-hearted gentleman," said Obadiah, "as ever lived."

"Ay, and as brave a one too," said the Corporal, "as ever stepped before a platoon. There never was a better officer in the King's army, or a better man in God's world; for he would march up to the mouth of a cannon, though he saw the lighted match at the very touchhole; and yet, for all that, he has a heart as soft as a child for other people. He would not hurt a chicken."

"I would sooner," quoth Jonathan (the coachman,) "drive such a gentleman for seven pounds a year, than some for eight."

Heartily, then, may we join in that generous burst, in which, about the middle of this story, Mr. Sterne breaks out in memory of his parent. And "here," too, as well as in that strange chronicle, "my heart stops me to pay to thee, my dear Uncle Toby, once for all, the tribute I owe to thy goodness. Here let me thrust my chair aside, and kneel down upon the ground, whilst I am pouring forth the warmest sentiments of love for thee, and veneration for the excellency of thy character. Peace and comfort rest evermore upon thy head!"

Like the famous Sir Roger, of Addison's make, this figure of my Uncle Toby, starting somewhat mistily, fills in, as it goes, with a wonderful clearness and brilliancy. He scarcely knew, at the outset, how it would grow under his hands.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

CORPORAL BUTLER.

Corporal Trim, Captain Shandy's man, was beyond question Ensign Sterne's servant, in the shape of an Irish orderly out of Hamilton's corps. Young Laurence, who was among the soldiers until he was eleven or twelve years old, must have met many such on the barrack-stairs in his father the Ensign's quarters. He is Irish in every stroke, this noted Corporal Butler, one whom the fighting captains of our time would covet for valet or body-servant: for, with true Celtic versatility, "of excellent use was he, attending my Uncle Toby in camp and in his quarters as valet, barber, groom, cook, sempster, and nurse; and, indeed, from first to last" (another Celtic trait), "waited on him with great fidelity and affection." He was also "well-beloved in the regiment," and "a handy fellow into the bargain;" and got this *sobriquet* of Trim from that good-humoured personality which only pursues honest popular fellows. Later on, too, in a very awkward strait, when Captain Shandy was obliged to accept of a bed at Mrs. Wadman's, through the unfurnished state

of Shandy Hall, "Corporal Trim (who to the character of an excellent valet, groom, cook, sempster, surgeon, and engineer, superadded that of an excellent upholsterer too), with the help of a carpenter and a couple of tailors, constructed one in my Uncle Toby's house." Very Irish, too, was he in that seasoning and interlarding of his speech, with perpetual "Your *honours*," and such respectful military homage. Yet more Irish was his pleasant garrulity, and grave and uninvited copartnership in the conversation, yet always decent and respectful, "as if upon parade." Irish, too, his story-telling about the King of Bohemia and his Seven Castles, which, through provoking digressions and interruptions, never reached any consistent shape or figure; or about his brother Tom, that married the Portuguese sausage-maker; or about his "Popish clergywoman," or Beguine, who tended his wound with such delicate care. Irish, too, his deferential respect to clergymen, and his constant and profuse salutation of Mr. Yorick's curate as "Your Reverence." A little Irish, too, that speech of the Corporal's when unfolding his legend of the King of Bohemia; and which my Uncle Toby seemed to insinuate verged a little on a bull. "There happening," says the Corporal, "throughout the whole kingdom of Bohemia to be no seaport town whatever"—— "How the deuce should there, Trim!" cried my Uncle Toby; "for Bohemia being totally inland, it could have happened no otherwise." Not a little

Irish, too, is his rueful view of Le Fever's case —a view very characteristic of the lower classes in that country.—"In a fortnight or three weeks," added my Uncle Toby, smiling, "he might march." "He will never march, an' please your honour, in this world," said the Corporal. "He will march," said my Uncle Toby, rising up from the side of the bed, with one shoe off. "An' please your honour, he will never march but to his grave." "He shall march," cried my Uncle Toby, ". . . to his regiment." "He cannot stand it," said the Corporal. And so the good-humoured contradiction proceeds, between two of the noblest and most brilliantly-drawn figures in the whole gallery of fiction.

They stand out roundly, and have flesh and blood, and veins, and hearts, and feelings. We can lay our hands upon my Uncle Toby's broad cuff. We can see his faithful follower limping across the drawbridge, made on the model of the Marquis d'Hôpital's. Two such men are more precious to us than real figures who cross our path in life; they are friends whom we shall be glad to meet in youth and in old age; and as Scott wrote of another amiable character, who has lived and breathed, and whom we have almost taken by the hand, we should bless the memory of a writer who knows so well how to reconcile us with human nature. And this best test of all remains behind, that some of us have known many a genuine copy of that dear Uncle Toby, who, like him, would not have harmed the fly; who, like him, was

brave, yet gentle as a woman—who was leavened through and through with a sort of delicate kindness and consideration, that reached almost to chivalry; who, like him, could present pictures of an older school of fighting, coloured with a certain dramatic propriety, and who would put on the scarlet *roquelaure* and the "laced cloaks out of the great campaign trunk," or the "white Ramellie wig," which his servant was to put "into fresh pipes,"—a full and perfect testimony to Mr. Sterne's exquisite mastery of the great art of painting man and his nature.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

ON THE MARCH AGAIN.

In that peaceful elysium of "Elvington, near York," the weary, battered marching Ensign, with his wife and two children, enjoyed a grateful repose. Kinsman Simon Sterne, of Elvington, is generous and hospitable, as befits a squire of the old Yorkshire stock, and in no hurry to be free of his relations. After all that roughing it in trenches, that rude voyaging on baggage-waggon, or stage "machine," or untold sufferings in that "middle passage" down in holds of wretched tossing transports, very sweet and acceptable must have come that lull and gentle calm in the green and well-wooded Yorkshire country. Let them relish it while they may, and Dame Sterne, the heiress of Sir Roger Jaques, made them comfortable as befitted Squire Simon's widow.

But the Ensign,—"a little smart man" be it recollected, "and active to the last degree in all exercises,"—was, no doubt, restless in that plaisaunce, and nervously forecasting how he was to provide for those two little mouths, and for that third stranger—of whose proximate arrival toler-

ably distinct symptoms were being already shadowed forth. About ten months pass away in this refitting, as it were, of their poor shattered crafts.

Suddenly news comes down to Elvington that Chudleigh's Thirty-fourth—for Chudleigh had now succeeded Hamilton in the colonelcy—is to be again "established." The War-office of that day—with that uncertainty of calculation which has characterised all British War-offices before or since—had determined to restore what it had destroyed but a few months before; "Chudleigh's" was to be "re-established" forthwith.* Joyful news for the Ensign in his Yorkshire happy valleys; but unluckily it was to be "established" in Dublin, which was no such acceptable tidings. A perverse disposition as to distances would seem to have clouded his destinies, and it would appear to be his cruel fortune to be always on the march.

It was now come to the winter of the year 1714—"a sad winter," Mr. Sterne calls it—and he must leave the pleasant Yorkshire meads, and with wife and two babies, "decamp with bag and baggage for Dublin," by the "machine," or stage-coach (not the swift Highflyer or Antelope of the period, which would be too costly a conveyance)—the Ensign most likely riding on the top, as outside passenger, or in the "basket." "To one jolting over the stones in every country town," said one who later travelled

* It is surprising how accurate is Mr. Sterne in all his recollections. Every rood of his father's wanderings agrees with the known movements of the regiment. See Cannon's "History."

in precisely this fashion, "this captive state might be deemed truly dreadful, both as to pain and fatigue."* Some thirty or forty years later, during a hard winter, the York stage has been from eight to ten days getting on to London. From York, across to Liverpool, in this "sad winter," must have been an equally tedious progress.

"Chudleigh's Thirty-fourth" was re-formed in Dublin. We are happily enabled to know Ensign Roger's brother officers, and even the very uniform he wore. The Colonel was Chudleigh, the Lieutenant-Colonel, Whitney, and the Major, Charles Douglas. The Captains were Hayes, Dawes, Doige, Moore, Matys, Shelton, and Pyott. The Lieutenants were Sanbeyeres, Yard, Cooksey, Brereton, Hamilton, Tremaigne, Batten, Phillips, White, Hayes, and Ford. The Ensigns were Sirck, *Roger Sterne*, Sutton, Shaddy, Bilson, Parker, Price, and Wickham. Sterne, it will be seen, was second Ensign. On the Parade, in Dublin, they wore a tri-cornered hat, a full-skirted scarlet coat, turned up with the brightest yellow facings, a scarlet waistcoat, white trimmings, and white gaiters.

Here is our little party housed at last in Dublin Barracks; the regiment happily "established," and Mrs. Sterne looking forward to that inevitable trial, which stands her in the stead of an annual probation, and which may be reasonably reckoned on as likely to come about under circumstances of

* Tate Wilkinson.

tolerable comfort. Man and woman may propose, but the British War-office, with its old fitful irregularity, disposes; and before the month is out, orders arrive for instant departure for Exeter. Fresh breaking up; the Ensign sailing with his regiment; the poor lady and her little one having to follow by another sailing-packet to Liverpool, in such weather as is usually found during the winter season between Dublin and that port; thence on by stage to Plymouth. What the sufferings during this progress is hinted at in this dismal parenthesis from the memoir—("Melancholy description of this journey not necessary to be transcribed here.") At all events, the troubles of that Plymouth journey may be at least guessed at; for, on reaching that town, the crisis came on, and a third babe came into the world, like the two others—upon the march. Genuine "children of the regiment" these. Joram was the strange name selected for this new pledge.

Barely twelve months at Exeter, when the grand centre of War-office circumlocution is moved, and a military ukase issues that Chudleigh's shall tramp it back again to Dublin. Again does the Ensign go on board, and again does the faithful drudge of a wife, now incumbered with her three babes, prepare to follow. She gets down to Bristol, barely hears the chimes of St. Mary Redcliffe, and is on board again, tossing in the Severn. A stormy voyage, during which they spring a leak, are in danger, and "have a narrow escape from being cast away." At length, "after many perils and struggles," they

arrive in the pleasant anchorage of Dublin Bay. Here they may reasonably look for some repose. Such promise is there, indeed, of prolonged occupation, that the Ensign takes a large roomy house, and establishes himself for a prolonged residence.

That viceregal city has always been pretty notorious for stately mansions—things somewhat palatial and imposing—which even now strike the stranger with a certain grand and dreamy sense of spaciousness almost useless; of strange echoing flights of steps, of bold porticoes, of vast halls, of acres of bridecake stucco, and of panelling painted by cunning Italian artists, fetched over from Italy specially for the work. Some such "large house" the Ensign took; "furnished it;" and his son adds, significantly, "in a year and a half's time, spent a great deal of money." The bold Irish profusion about him was a little infectious, and our Ensign, on his three shillings and twopence halfpenny a day, caught it.

Some one, only a few years later, driving in through College Green to Abbey Street, on his "road over Essex Bridge, was vastly pleased at seeing the numbers of lamps, sedan-chairs, carriages, hackney coaches, footmen with flambeaux, &c., as it appeared to resemble another London." The Dublin dining hour was then five o'clock, far later at that time than London dinners, which, with people in business, were usually fixed at three. This is no unsuitable test of the manners of the respective cities,

London and Dublin. The spacious mansions, too, were peopled with noblemen and great commoners, who held high cheer and festival, which carnival was later to bear its full fruit in the shape of an Incumbered Estates Act.

Ensign Sterne, now established in his large roomy house, which he had so handsomely furnished by the Dublin upholsterers, would have fallen in with several of his name, and possibly of his kin, who were settled in that city. There was Mr. Enoch Sterne and Henry Baker Sterne, Esquire, who were Clerks to the Parliament; and there was General Sterne in command at the Irish "Invalides," out at Kilmainham. Possibly, he being of good family, would have mixed in company, of which my Lord Forbes, Lords Milltown, Bellamont, and others, were leaders. But for money transactions he might have recourse to Alderman Nuttal, of the banking firm of "Nuttall & M'Gwire, of Lower Ormondkey,"—the senior partner being likely enough to be connected with that "noted sutler," with whom the reader made acquaintance not very far back. With those other Sternes, diaconal and ecclesiastical, he might have had some intercourse—more particularly with that "John Sterne, Esquire, of Ormondkey," who later was to fill the municipal office of "Sheriff-peer" for the year 1733.

"In a year and a half's time," says the little memorandum, "spent a great deal of money;" which knack of spending a great deal of money, and purveying a great many hostages to the State, is a

common *specialité* with these poor ensigns of the Le Fever stamp. This Dublin existence filled in some three years, when in the year 1719 "all unhinged again;" not this time, however, through any unreasonable whim of the great circumlocution office.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.

THE VIGO EXPEDITION.

Cardinal Alberoni had been haughtily bearding their Majesties of England and France; the Quadruple Alliance had been "patched up;" Admiral Sir George Byng had been fighting the Spanish Admirals and an Irish Admiral Cammock off the coast; and now the "Secret Expedition" for Corunna—tremendously bellied about for all its secrecy—was being organised at Spithead. Unluckily Chudleigh's, and still more unluckily Ensign Sterne, was selected as portion of the four thousand men who were to embark. All, therefore, "unhinged again." Back again to Bristol in the transports—rocking down in their condemned holds—stalled there like human cattle with the men: for "we accompanied the regiment," writes he, who was then carried on board by a private—little Laury, then nearly six years of age. The demon of the seas did indeed seem to have some special spite against that officer's lady and her offspring; for it lost no chance, in all those repeated Channel crossings, of working her some piece of mischief. After much stormy buffeting they were

blown into Milford Haven; got to sea again, and were blown into Bristol, now pretty familiar to this poor female camp-follower, as she may be called; thence by land along the old road to Plymouth, and afterwards to the Isle of Wight, where all the troops were placed under canvas, and were at last finally got on board five men-of-war off Spithead. Then the public Secret Expedition—which everybody knew of—sailed away under the command of my Lord Cobham.

An old journal of the day sets out all the stages of this Vigo expedition, with a nervous particularity which shows some reasonable doubt as to the temper of the public mind; for it was communicated by "a person of great integrity and merit;" and "it will appear that, all circumstances considered, my Lord Cobham did all that could be expected from the most consummate and wisest commander to annoy the enemy." "This morning," says the "person of great integrity and merit," "the transports, with the four regiments of Hawley, Barrel, Grove, and Howard, arrived from Ireland." The next day, "the transports from the other regiments, viz., those in the Island of Wight" (among which was Ensign Sterne's), "were ordered to West Cows."

"The 4th August. The transports with forces on board," and Ensign Sterne, "began to fall down from Cows to Spithead."

The 9th ditto. Sailed from "Spithead to St. Helen's, with the men-of-war and transports. N.B. —That four transports stayed at Spithead to take

in beer, &c." We shall never know whether the Ensign was all this time tossing in the chops of the Channel or pleasantly engaged in one of the four transports "taking in beer." It is recorded later that "ten tuns of beer were taken on board the Ipswich."

Then followed many entries of rough weather, of "blowing hard in the night," and "foul weather and blowing a storm S.W." The "Bomb Ketch" was in distress, finally disappeared, and had to be searched for ineffectually. At last, on the 29th September, our expedition, with Ensign Sterne on board, entered Vigo Bay—landed; and the British soldier going ashore, "abused himself so much with wine, that they might have given us a great deal of uneasiness." At Delville, Mrs. Delany's pretty villa, near Dublin, was to be seen a crucifix, brought from Vigo—no doubt a portion of the spoil brought home by some Irish regiment. Without being too fanciful, we can almost trace it —from Ensign Roger to his daughter Maria, the "beautiful woman," that married the bankrupt Wimmins—from the bankrupt's sale to the bankrupt's brother, who married the sister of Doctor Delany.

Had young Laurence any recollection of that terrible storm, through which he was rocked in his mother's arms, and in which some of the transports, containing several companies of their regiment, went down with all hands? It might as well have been the one carrying the infant Shandean, and the nation would have lost its Rabelais.

On the journey, however, between Plymouth and the Isle of Wight, smallpox broke out among Ensign Sterne's non-effectives, and (we might almost say mercifully) removed the child of the cacophonous name, little Joram—"a pretty boy," says his brother, writing his epitaph, only four years old. However, only two days after the sailing of my Lord Cobham's expedition, this loss was promptly supplied; and the industrious Ensign's lady, who would have handsomely merited the rough compliments of Napoleon, furnished to the world another item of population, in the shape of a little girl, who was called Anne—no doubt in compliment to that Anne Sterne, the Archbishop's granddaughter, who had come into Ireland.

In the pleasant pasture of the breezy island, the Ensign's lady rested for many months. It is likely enough that Ryde, which lay almost in sight of Spithead, was the portion of the island she selected for her stay; now grown very fashionable, and a watering-place of reputation, and altogether something changed from the days when, a few years later, the dying author of "Tom Jones" put in there on his last voyage. The extortions of Mrs. Francis, the hostess of the public-house, and her bill for bread and rum and "wind" reaching to thirteen-and-fourpence, which he has put on record, are significant tokens that the officer's lady and his family had, with the usual luck of poor gentility, not selected the most economical place of residence in the world. Then word reaches them that the Secret

Expedition has done its work—such poor work, indeed, as landing at Vigo instead of Corunna, and pillaging a fair quantity of small-arms and ammunition, and enduring a comic Spanish fusillade from the mountains — some half-a-dozen musket-shots away. Having scarcely accomplished the business it was sent for, this "miss-fire expedition," as the author of "Friedrich" names it, returns, and Chudleigh's are once more home again at Wicklow in their own country.

To this Portuguese flight the world owes that article of dress which has become very precious, Trim's famous "montero cap;" and, more precious still, Trim's own tears over that brother Tom who married the Portuguese sausage-maker and was put in the Inquisition. More indirectly, too, we owe to it the burst against that institution with which Mr. Sterne broke out one Sunday in the pulpit—a little inappropriately, it must be confessed. That these incidents came, in some shape, to the child Laurence, from officer or soldier, seems almost certain. Where can be found so rich and picturesque a covering? What article of dress has been so sanctified by being pledged and pawned in familiar wagerings by that trusty follower? We admire and relish its warm colouring; for it was "scarlet, of a superfine Spanish cloth, dyed in grain, and mounted all round with fur, except about four inches in front, which was faced with a light-blue, slightly embroidered, and seemed to have been the property of a Portuguese quartermaster—not of foot, but of

horse, as the word denotes." It is not the less dear to us because this amiable corporal "was not a little proud of it"—so seldom or never put it on but on gala days; and though it was a little faded and worn, and needed "furnishing up" sadly, we would not have the gold repaired and the light-blue facing renewed. Poor Tom's—Trim's brother—courtship and advances to females, even through such unpoetic materials as the elements of sausage-making, are so many hints of the science of one who was so profoundly skilled in the niceties of the Art of Love.

The "grass widow," as it is known in military *argot*—Mrs. Sterne—must get ready again for her inevitable sea-passage. Poor soul! she must know every buoy and headland of that Bristol and Dublin journey. They are scarcely on board when, by the usual law of Sterne sea-voyaging, the waters rise, and they "had all been cast away by a most violent storm;" but, through Mrs. Sterne's intercession, a soft-hearted captain was got to turn back again, and to put into some Welsh port, where they lived a full month—of course at more expense—and finally got safely into familiar Dublin Bay.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH.

"THE MEETING OF THE WATERS."

Ensign Roger—what with the storms and the lack of advices of the ship, and that month's delay in the Welsh port—had given them all over for lost "for some weeks," says the chronicler; and was surprised one morning in his Wicklow barracks by the arrival of his whole family, Mrs. Sterne and her nurses, with Mary, Anne, and little Laury—now a delicate boy of seven years old, whom the Ryde sea-breezes had not fortified very perceptibly. In that soft and delightful county—the emerald corner of Ireland—in the heart of the grateful glens, and the vales where sweet waters meet, and, by way of contrast, where are the sombre shores of the lake, over which skylark never flutters—in this charming region did they tarry a whole year, in the course of which fortune bestowed her never-failing gift on the marching Ensign, and the little mouths were increased to four.

There was a Colonel Devischer (Mr. Sterne calls him Deveijeher, in its original Dutch nakedness), who was afterwards colonel of my Lord Rothes' 9th Regiment of Foot, at this time on the Staff in

Ireland, and after him was the new-comer christened. More likely still, this had been a friendship cemented during that "miss-fire" Vigo expedition,—Colonel Devischer being either on my Lord Cobham's staff, or having some influence with that commander; for eager news-readers of that date were to find one morning in their Flying Post, or Gazette,—or in that monthly journal, "The Political State of Great Britain," where we now find it, —that, "This morning arrived Colonel Devischer with despatches from my Lord Cobham."

We are now (A.D. 1720) still in Wicklow Barracks. Here there is discovered one Reverend Mr. Fetherston, who is living some seven miles from the little town of Wicklow, being vicar of the musically-sounding parsonage of Animo—Anamoe it has become since. Parson Fetherston proves to be Mrs. Sterne's relation—as likely a brother as any other—who, with good old Hibernian hospitality, takes the wanderers into his home and keeps them for six months. Plenty of such good-nature was the Sterne family to encounter during its gipsy rambles.

Eight years old now, Master Laurence was growing apace, and enjoying, no doubt, free and unrestrained times over the green commons of Animo. To the childish mind, the warm sunshine all day long—the new-mown hay—the open country —the fields and the woods—the browned and flushing cheek—the violent heats—make up the most delicious elysium and child's *summum bonum*, to be

thought of in after-years with regret—a life for Laury so free and uncontrolled that an accident had nearly brought him destruction, and the "Sentimental Journey" never been written. Paddling, with the mysterious pleasure peculiar to infancy, at the edge of a millrace, the boy tumbled in, and was swept away under the huge waterwheel, then revolving. Rescue seemed hopeless, when, to the amazement of some bystanders, he was shot out at the other side into smooth water, perfectly unharmed. "The story is incredible," writes Mr. Sterne, and with some justice; for there are few cases of escape from so horrible a peril. And, in consequence, Master Laurence became a sort of show or prodigy child; and the countrypeople came crowding in hundreds, filled with an extraordinary curiosity to see the actor in this wonderful escape. To this hour is the millrace to be seen at Anamoe. The country people tell of a luckless doctor who was drowned there, but the tradition has not been preserved of the English officer's son who had the wonderful escape.*

Was it about this season that he cast aside "his vest and tunics," in which he looked "extremely well," and was put into those breeches (leathern or dimity, it remains uncertain) about which the famous discussion took place between Mr. and Mrs. Shandy,

* It is one of the most curious coincidences in the history of accidents, that his great-grandfather, the Archbishop, when a boy, should have had the same "deliverance"—precisely the same in shape and incidents.

and in which Mr. Shandy pettishly pronounced he would "look like a beast"? Are these dim floating memories of childish years, with which these shiftings of costume are great festival-days? Was this a snatch, a scrap out of the first act of the great play of life—a whisper from the past? These things are hard to speculate over; and yet, somehow, it is likely—more than likely—that every writing man, for this or that picture which tells so powerfully, fetches up some fossil recollection, however remote in shape or figure, and twists and polishes it into something of the thing he wants. Breeched or unbreeched, young Laury was now growing up apace, and might well be thankful for his deliverance. By-and-by they must quit the good kinsman-vicar, and pass on after the regiment to Dublin Barracks once more, "where we lay," says Mr. Sterne, "a year." No taking of a large house this time. In this year, too, of '21, he chronicles with some pride that he "learned to write, &c.," whatever that comprehensive *et cetera* may stand for; and in this year, too, by the strict law of compensation which attended on Mrs. Sterne's periodic increases to her family, little Anne, Deveijehers' immediate predecessor, was carried off "in the barracks of Dublin." The sanitary accommodation of those establishments at this period was not fitted for the proper nurture of children, besides, "she was of a fine delicate frame" (for Mr. Sterne recollects her perfectly), "not made to last long, as were most of my father's babes."

CHAPTER THE NINTH.

FRESH WANDERINGS!

The following year—1722, war circumlocution changes its mind again, and orders away Chudleigh's very far north indeed—to Carrickfergus, some miles beyond Belfast; quarters not very much to be coveted.

"We all decamped" accordingly; yet had got no further than Drogheda—scarcely a third of the road, when circumlocution again steps in, with a spasmodic *moi je le veux*, bids them strike off westwardly, some forty miles, to Mullingar town—with what purpose we cannot guess at. These persecuted men would seem to have been the very Wandering Jews of the service. However, the wind is to be tempered for the shorn lamb (according to the pretty proverb which was fabricated for the "Sentimental Journey"), and in this unpropitious neighbourhood they "stumbled upon" a Sterne of the old original Yorkshire stock—a sojourner in that wilderness, "a collateral descendant from Archbishop Sterne," says the Reverend Laurence, with scarcely strict accuracy; for on this "kind relation" we, too, are happily enabled "to stumble," and we

can fix his identity with something very near akin to certainty. That emigrant John Sterne of Cambridge, who, it will be recollected, came over to Ireland as the English Bishop's "Officer," had another son—besides that Crichton Doctor, John Sterne, who was physician, scholar, and divine—called Robert, who took to the army, was a "souldier in Lord Fleetwood's regiment," and became "Robert Stearne" (enriched with an *a*), "of Tullinally, Westmeath, Esq." He married one Anne Stevens, and, dying about the year 1660, left four daughters and two sons, John and Robert; and one of these, Robert, became a brigadier in the army, and governor of the Irish "Invalides"—the picturesque old hospital which Sir Christopher Wren built for the Irish old soldiers. This officer, who was alive up to the year 1727, must have been the host who entertained the Sterne family at his castle, which would be about forty miles west of Drogheda.

These relations of the Sterne family—collateral and otherwise—were a rare and prodigious genus; extinct, it is to be feared, now, and created almost for the special function of supplying the exigencies of this nomad family. This wonderful "collateral" took the whole party off to his "castle," near Mullingar, actually kept them for a whole year, "entreated" them hospitably, loaded them with kindness, and finally sent them on their way rejoicing to Carrickfergus, where Chudleigh's was already established. That mysterious divergence to Mullingar rests in eternal obscurity.

It has been thought that a recollection of his father's image—the wandering Ensign, broken, straightened, and hunted as it were from quarter to quarter—must have supplied the picture of Le Fever. No doubt some such recollection was in his mind. But with it was fused another recollection; and the two together made up the pathetic deathbed, which many a schoolboy has read, with deep sorrow, in his "Speaker." It is said that there had come over to Portarlington, in the Huguenot exodus, a certain Le Fevre, who set up a French school there; and that a son of his had obtained a commission in the army, and had someway crossed Mr. Sterne's early pilgrimage—most likely at this time, when he was a child at Mullingar, which is only a couple of posts away from Portarlington. This scholastic memory seems to have remained; for it will be recollected that Le Fever's son becomes a schoolmaster.*

As soon as they took the road again their old travelling luck waited on them. It proved to be "a most rueful and tedious journey," in the very heart of March, and consumed no less than six or seven days.

No sooner are they established in barracks at Carrickfergus than Ensign Sterne must fly back again to Wicklow; unearths the poor child with the Dutch name, who had been put to nurse

* The tradition has been kept alive in the town, a Doctor Hanlon having a memorandum of a Mr. Halpin, containing the story, in his museum. See Willis's "Current Notes."

at a farmer's cottage, and takes him home in triumph, where he is no sooner arrived than this child with the Dutch name died. In the meantime, a little Susan had appeared—another "tender blossom," as it would appear; for "it left us behind," says Mr. Sterne, in his poetical way, "in this weary journey." The two grand principles of life—decay and restoration—were never so curiously illustrated. Another child, Catherine, came a year later, which was the last of Ensign Roger's progeny. Of the seven, Joram, Deveijeher, Susan, and Anne died very early; Mary, Catherine, and the Reverend Laurence survived and grew up. The first was peculiarly unfortunate. "She was a most beautiful woman," says Mr. Sterne, with a fond regret, painting in a sort of Reynolds portrait, "of a fine figure." She took root in Dublin, and married, he says, a sort of scampish merchant, "one Weemans" by name (Wimmins was the true name*)—a son of a Dublin Mr. Wimmins, who died in 1711, and whose other son married a sister of the now well-known Dean of Down, the husband of Mrs. Delany. That charming lady, Mrs. Pendarves, who hankered after "Tristram Shandy," (though she dare not buy it in Dublin, and was fond of Sterne's sermons,)—was very likely to have known her husband's relation—the beautiful sister of Sterne—and her luckless fate. "He used her most unmercifully—spent his subsistence—became a bankrupt, and left my poor sister to shift for herself,

* See Administration granted to Roger Sterne's widow.

which she was able to do but for a few months; for she went to a friend's house in the country, and died of a broken heart." This is the dismal story of Sterne's sister—a little history in itself. There is yet another sister, Catherine, who will turn up later.

"You see, 'tis high time to take this young creature out of those women's hands," said Mr. Shandy, one morning, to Captain Shandy and the Rev. Mr. Yorick, "and put him into those of a private governor;" and young "Laury" (for he is spelled in the old books), being now close on eleven years old, it was becoming reasonable to think of seriously beginning his education. That running wild over green hills, with attendant risks of tumbling into mill-streams, and that perverse unsteadiness of quarters, was very little favourable to progress in reading, writing, and those other branches denoted by an "et cetera:" so it was determined that the child should go to school forthwith.

Another journey for Ensign Roger, the military *knight-errant*, who, "in the autumn or the spring afterwards" (for Mr. Sterne does not recollect which), set out with his boy, having "got leave of his Colonel, to fix him at school;" which makes, as it were, the first halting-stage in the life of the Reverend Laurence.

He never saw that dear father again—the "little smart man," who was of so "kindly and sweet a disposition, void of all design." As the chaise rolled away from Halifax school—and that rolling

away of the chaise is one of the blankest moments in a short schoolboy probation—the heart of Master Laurence must have welled up. And while he is being taken away with words of artificial comfort, and shown to a world of strange faces, new playmates—plunged, as it were, into a new stage of existence—we may now, once for all, follow out the fortunes of the poor officer, and go with him to the end of those "fatigues" of which "it pleased God to give him such full measure."

The regiment next passed on to Londonderry, where it sojourned sufficient time to allow Mrs. Sterne to add a new citizen to the population of the famous maiden city. By-and-by came one of the famous sieges of Gibraltar, that of 1727; and it follows, almost as of course, that Chudleigh's must be selected to aid in the defence of the impregnable fort. Ensign Sterne, therefore, embarks again—is huddled on board the transport, whose accommodation is now very familiar to him, and sails away, never to return. He shall never see the pleasant Wicklow greenery, nor the soft Vale of Avoca, where the sweet waters meet; no, nor that "*placens uxor*," who had been so fruitful—whose nature, of whatever kind, must have been chastened, by many hardships and wanderings, into true patience and gentleness: for she was left behind with her family, and it is very likely, from the fact of her daughter being married to that Irish Weemans, who became so deplorably bankrupt,

that she lived and died in Ireland. We shall hear but little of her again, and that little but of a disastrous sort. That poor genteel tramp —for she was little more—sinks under the waters at this place!

CHAPTER THE TENTH.

REPOSE AT PORT ANTONIO.

"SPANIARDS actually begin battering at Gibraltar," writes Mr. Carlyle, in his wonderful diorama of "Friedrich," introducing the year 1727 with some disparagement. "Sputtering of war: that is to say, siege of Gibraltar—a siege utterly immemorable, and without the least interest for existing mankind with their ungrateful humour, if it be not that the father of *Tristram Shandy* was in it."

In that bombardment of the Rock of Gibraltar, it will be thought that any reasonable British soldier would have found his fill of fighting; but our Lieutenant (for he had attained that rank now) was "in his temper somewhat rapid and hasty," and so must engage in a quarrel with one "Captain Philips," which could only be resolved by the arbitrament then customary with men of honour. This "difficulty" arose about a goose, which, taken with the trifles that have often given rise to duels, was a really substantial ground of quarrel. Whatever shape of discord the unlucky bird took, the combat resulted in Lieutenant

Sterne's being run through the body by Captain Philips. There is a loose floating story, uncorroborated by authority, in reference to this rencontre, and which can be assigned to no distinct *locale*. The affair took place, it is said, in a room; and Captain Philips put his rapier with such vigour through Lieutenant Sterne's person, that he actually pinned him to the wall behind. Then, with infinite presence of mind, the "little smart man" begged of Captain Philips, with much courtesy, that before withdrawing his blade he would have the courtesy to brush off any plaster adherent to the point.* And who was this Captain Philips? We look back to the roll of officers at the re-establishment, and find him there "Lieutenant Christopher Philips." He had been the Ensign's lieutenant, and was now the Lieutenant's captain. The unlucky officer did indeed survive that impalement by Captain Philips, but "with an impaired constitution;" which seems likely enough; or rather, it appears singular that he should fare so handsomely.

Presently sailing orders arrive—the Gibraltar business being done—and the regiment is put on board for further service in Jamaica Island—a not insalubrious climate at the present time, but scarcely so well understood by Europeans then as it is now. Lieutenant Sterne reached it, and found grateful quarters in the white airy houses, with their green verandahs, which Matthew Lewis, of

* This I have on the authority of Mr. Waterton, the well-known naturalist, whose father knew Mr. Sterne well.

"The Monk," was hereafter to describe so pleasantly. Still, that through-and-through impalement was not to be so readily got rid of, and the heats would not be favourable to the cure of a wound of such a description. His constitution was "impaired," says his son, "and not able to withstand the hardships it was put to." Presently came the "country fever"—the fatal "yellow jack" of the sailors—which seized him in its gripe, which, with that impalement to work on, was not long over its fatal mission. Still, it affected him curiously. He was sent to Port Antonio, at the northern side of the island, where the air was presumed to have been fresher and cooler; and there, not being able to shake off the "country fever," it first "took away his senses, and made a child of him," says his son, describing his end; and "then, in a month or two, walking about continually without complaining, till the moment he sat down in an armchair, and breathed his last." A pathetic, graphic picture, slightly halting and ungrammatical, but which yet brings before us the poor English officer in the remote tropical island, far away from his friends and home, dying out so quietly—dying of his poor pierced lung and of that yellow "country fever!" In the same tranquil way, the marching Lieutenant Le Fever glided away. "Nature instantly ebbed again—the film returned to its place—the pulse fluttered—stopped—went on—throbbed—stopped again—moved—stopped—Shall I go on? No."

This was in the March of the year 1731. There were to be no more wanderings for the weary officer—no more shifting of quarters: the toil and worry of the march was now to cease from troubling, and the weary was to find repose. What a sad and hopeless pilgrimage to look back to! Twenty-three years' service that we know of—and more that we know not of, and only a poor marching Lieutenant at his end! That "future and dreadful page," which Mr. Sterne himself "forecasted for his own Uncle Toby," was rehearsed at that Port Antonio, where Lieutenant Sterne now sleeps. The dismal, yet sublime ceremonial of the soldier carried to the grave—"the velvet pall, decorated with the insignia of thy master—the lacquered plate, the sword and scabbard laid across the coffin, and the mourning horse, taken by the bridle to follow the hearse." This picture of the interment of Lieutenant Sterne must have come to his son from some floating story brought home from Port Antonio. His Colonel—the regiment was now called "Haye's"—died the very next month, and the command passed to Cornwallis. Late the following year—on the eighteenth of August—his widow took out administration in the Irish Courts, and in that instrument, her name and that of her three children, Maria, Catherine, and Laurence, are mentioned. Laurence, far away across the seas, at Halifax school, a stripling now full seventeen years old, knows not of the yellow fever, nor of his misfortune: he never saw that kind father again.

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH.

HALIFAX FREE SCHOOL.

At Halifax, close to Heath, was a free grammar school, founded by Queen Elizabeth, principally for the benefit of children from the parish and district of Halifax; but the master was allowed to take a number of pupils to board, not upon the foundation. At this school was young Tristram "fixed" by his father.

The choice was natural. "Richard Sterne, Esquire," was, in the year 1727, one of the governors; and Woodhouse was but a mile and a half away from the town. Squire Simon had been buried in Halifax Church; and, without much stretch, young Laurence could be brought in upon the foundation as a child of the parish.

Laurence, then eleven years old, must have brought with him learning sufficient "to read English, and to be promoted to the Accidence"—according to the quaint provision of the charter. He must, therefore, have got over the preparatory stages at home—the "five years with a bib under his chin: four years in travelling from Chriscross row to Malachi: a year and a half in learning to

write his own name." He was now to consume the "seven long years and more Τυπτω-ing it at Greek and Latin." This was also the probation Mr. Shandy's son passed through. There is no means of comparing the bib-and-tucker stage of the two youths, Tristram and Laurence; but it is a curious proof of the accuracy with which Mr. Sterne has drawn from his own experience —that he was sent to school just about a year and a half after he had learnt to write; and that, like young Tristram, he remained at his Halifax school some "seven long years and more," construing *Tupto.*

At the Halifax school, young Sterne, running on into his nineteenth year, must have been a rather advanced and full grown scholar. It has been mentioned that he never could have seen that Lieutenant father of his from the day he drove away from the gate; neither is it likely that his eyes ever rested again on that poor tramping mother whom he had left behind him at Carrickfergus. This parent, indeed, will later turn up again in a cloud of sad rumours. Neither is she to take shape hereafter in her son's writings—muffled in any Shandean domino — transfigured, yet recognisable. There is no companion-picture in the Tristram gallery: neither does her portrait hang beside that of the Lieutenant.

We fortunately know who was the "Doctor Paidagunus" who presided over the curriculum of Master Laurence at the Yorkshire school. But we

cannot guess whether he possessed all those curious acquirements which the elder Mr. Shandy held to be of the last importance in the selection of a governor. That model schoolmaster was neither to "lisp, nor squint, nor talk loud, nor look fierce or foolish, nor bite his lips—nor speak through his nose—nor blow it with his fingers." Nor yet was he "to strike, or pinch, or tickle—or bite, or cut his nails, or hawk, or spit, or snift, or drum with his feet or finger, in company." But these were purely physical perfections, possibly very rare among those who had the direction of young gentlemen. It was Mr. Thomas Lister—who, curious to say, was a Bachelor in Physic, and belonged to Jesus College, Cambridge, the special college of the Sternes—that directed Laurence's studies up to the year 1727. On his death, the governors seemed to have utterly overlooked the interests of the school, and either forgot, or neglected, to fill up the office of master and usher: and we are told that "the school was fallen into great decay and disrepute."* And after a lapse of about two years, new governors were appointed by the archbishop, and a new master, Mr. Christopher Jackson, set over the institution. This disorganisation must have been prejudicial to Laurence's education:—and though he may have learnt "the accidence," and travelled from Chriscross Row to Malachi, it is certain that the useful elements of spelling were neglected. For to the end of his life Mr. Sterne

* "History of Halifax."

made terrible mistakes in his spelling—even in print.

There is a sort of juvenile Shandeism in that well-known boyish freak of his, which he himself wrote down, not without a certain complacency, a few months before his death. The schoolroom was being made resplendent with new whitewash; but the incautious workmen had left their ladders and brushes behind. Up scrambled the mischievous urchin, and wrote in "large capital letters," a little staggering perhaps in outline, his own signature, LAU. STERNE. Presently came the angry usher, who, viewing such a prank as a capital offence, fetches his cane and whips the young decorator soundly; which heavy punishment "Doctor Paidagunus" comes presently to hear of;—more likely still, sees the offending characters staring down at him from his newly-beautified ceiling; but, strange to say, is "much hurt" at that castigation, and with that text makes a warm speech to all the scholars assembled, repudiates the usher, and protests that the "large capitals," LAU. STERNE, shall remain there uneffaced, *in perpetuam rei memoriam*—for that Master Sterne yonder was a boy of genius, who, he was sure, would "come to preferment." A day to be noted with a white mark in the annals of Halifax school, the tradition whereof was sure to be handed down and rehearsed, as the "new boys' " eyes wandered timidly to the "large capitals," and inquired who was LAU. STERNE?

How long, we may fairly speculate, did the "large

capitals" remain uneffaced on that Halifax ceiling? Possibly only until whitewashing time came round again: for there are many generations of school heroes. For it was not the immortality by carving which prevails at Harrow, and secures to Byrons, and boys of that calibre, a decent interval until they have proved their worth. This LAU. STERNE was no more than paint, easily effaceable; and thirty good years were to run before the village clergyman was to get his patent of fame. All credit, however, be given to that intelligent pedagogue who forecasted his scholar's horoscope so skilfully. Was it Mr. Lister or Mr. Jackson? Most likely it was Jackson the Bachelor of Arts, and not Lister the Bachelor in Physic. Mr. Sterne calls him "an able man." A man certainly of clear vision and intelligence for a director of a country school; or else that readiness and Shandeism of the youth must have been so declared as to be palpable to the eye of the dullest professor. But though the name has been effaced, the school-room still remains, and may be seen at this day—with the great oak beams across the ceiling on which the school-boy painted his name.

What manner of schoolboy he was, while under the Halifax ferula, we can but conjecture, and have only dim light to help us. That he was of the fitful irregular pattern—now far behind, now crackling and sparkling in the front rank, very brilliant and very idle, which is the traditional humour of those who are to break out hereafter

with a wild Cervantic course—is highly probable. "Yonder lean, cadaverous lad, who is always borrowing money, telling lies, leering at the housemaids, is Master Laurence Sterne, a bishop's grandson, and himself intended for the Church. For shame, you little reprobate! But what a genius the fellow has! He shall have a sound flogging, and as soon as the young scamp is out of the whipping-room give him a gold medal. Such would be my practice were I Doctor Birch, and Master of the school." *

A morning paper, published long after, when Master Sterne was grown up and famous, and when all the fashionable world was eager to learn particulars of the brilliant clergyman who wrote so oddly, furnishes a bare line or so in reference to this school-time, which, in the utter dearth of all particulars, becomes so far precious.† Of a certain authenticity, too, as it was whispered about ill-naturedly that the little memoir had been furnished by the reverend gentleman himself. "At school," it runs, "he would learn when he pleased, and not oftener than once a fortnight." A sentence pregnant with meaning for all its brevity, embodying the whole essence of Master Laurence's marks and judgment-books, his *satis's*, and *medioc's*, and *malès*, in great capitals.

* *Cornhill Magazine*, September, 1862. Happily this grim portrait of youthful depravity has no more historical basis than one of the pleasant rambling humours of Mr. Roundabout.

† *London Chronicle*, 1760. *Royal Female Magazine*, 1760.

The usher, who was so ready with his birch for that engrossing of "LAU. STERNE" on the new white-wash, could have told some histories of that very "unequal" boy, with his obstinate spells of idleness a fortnight long, and his spurts of brilliance and application which fetched him all his lost ground.

While Lieutenant Roger Sterne, of Chudleigh's, was being laid far off in his Jamaica grave, young Laurence, his son, was still at the Halifax school, It does not seem likely that the news could have reached him while he was still under its discipline; for his father's death, it will be recollected, took place in the month of March, 1731, and the date of the departure from school was some time towards the close of that year. The cumbrous argosies that drifted home leisurely from the Indies, in a year or fifteen months, carrying ship letters, would be likely to deliver their Jamaica news at about the same rate of speed. The postchaise that bore him away had not very far to journey, for his holiday and interval of emancipation was to be spent close by, at the seat of Squire Sterne, of "Elvington and Woodhouse."

To Squire Simon Sterne, who, it will be recollected, married the great Yorkshire heiress, the knight's daughter, has succeeded in the lordship of "Elvington and Woodhouse" an elder son, Richard—always a popular name with the Sternes—for whom is found a wife in "Dorothy, relict of S. Lister, of Shibden Hall." By and by, when the "relict of S. Lister" passes away, he finds

a lady ready to his hand, at Halifax, close by—possibly, from the mercantile association, not quite so distinguished as the "relict of S. Lister." And so, as the heralds chant, he weds *secundo* one Hester Booth. From the Dorothy Lister alliance came another Richard; a Mary, who in due time married T. Pulleyne, Esq., of Burley; and Anne, a second daughter. And it was to this Squire Richard the First, that Laurence came home.

Into our great National Museum, too, there has strayed, by some unaccountable freak, a loose memorandum-book or ledger of this date, preserved certainly by no design or any sense of its intrinsic merits. Some hawker herald, who professed to furnish the country gentry with their "coats of arms" properly emblazoned, had waited on the leading squires with tolerable success. And here, in a sort of chaos of entries, written in corners and at various angles, we read one pale, faded, straw-coloured entry—

"Richard Sterne, Esq., £1 5*s*."

Again, when the Reverend Styan Thirlby is writing to Mr. Theobald in reference to the subscriptions for his Shakspeare, on May the 7th, 1729, he makes this remark:—"Please add this name to the list, if he be not there already—Mr. Richard Sterne." He must, therefore, have had refined tastes, something above the Yorkshire Port wines and hunting fields.

He had a son, who became Squire Richard the

Second, and who, like his father, was married to a widow—the "relict of —— Swaine, Esq." These faces welcomed Laurence, now a young man of eighteen, to the house at Elvington.

The second Squire Richard when he succeeded would appear to have been a man of weight and respectability, and to have held his place among the Yorkshire gentlemen with a steady distinction. His name turns up handsomely where the name of an old and wealthy family might be looked for. Mr. Drake is bringing out his "Eboracum," a tall ponderous folio, which is to glorify the beauties of the capital of the county. Whole page minute engravings of the cathedral and its splendours enrich the work; and there is to be seen an elaborate copy of the archbishop's tomb, with his figure stretched out at length, and resting on his elbow, under a spreading canopy, with this inscription—

"Richard Sterne, of Elvington, Esquire, great grandson to this once most eminent prelate, dedicates this plate of his monument to his memory."

He had, in fact, defrayed the expense of engraving this tribute to the family glory. A trait very creditable to him, considering that he was a Yorkshire Squire of that day, and that Fielding's Squire Western was not so very long dead.

There were other faces to meet Laurence, too—girls' faces—a Frances and a Mary. And considering that the father of the present squire had married a second time—which brought a half-brother,

Timothy Sterne (married to Anne Wigglesworth), into the family, and two half-sisters—there could have been no lack of uncles and aunts and cousins to fill Elvington, to say nothing of the Kilvington branch, not very many miles away; but upon whom heraldic history is strangely silent, stopping short with Richard of Kilvington, son of the archbishop.

These little traits in Squire Richard betokening a certain refinement and softness of character, chime in naturally with Mr. Sterne's enthusiastic declaration, made long after, that "my cousin Sterne, of Elvington, by God's care of me, became a father to me." For, practically, the youth Laurence was now no more than an orphan, and stood much in need of such protection. Indeed it may be well suspected that this playing "more than a father" began long before, and, perhaps, defrayed the charges of the Halifax schooling; for that "taking of large houses" at Dublin, and spending "a great deal of money" in "a year and a half's time," was not likely to leave a large margin for educational purposes in a poor lieutenant's pay.

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH.

JESUS COLLEGE.

"Became a father to me, and sent me to the University," writes Mr. Sterne gratefully,—adding again one of those curious "&c." which may stand for abundant allowances and handsome discharge of college bills. Cambridge was the university selected; and Jesus College, for very sufficient reasons, was the college at which his name was entered.

This choice was very natural. At Cambridge the name of Sterne was deservedly acceptable. The memory of the Divine Right Archbishop, who had, indeed, been so "active in sending the Cambridge Plate to his Majesty"—an inexpensive act of personal loyalty, yet for which those who came after him, and regarded their naked *buffets*, could scarcely be grateful—was still green at the University. The great grandson of the Primate of York was sure to be welcome. But at Jesus College, where the defunct Archbishop had ruled as Master, and which he had enriched with foundations and benefactions, there were reasons why he should be specially acceptable.

"In the year 1732 my cousin sent me to the

University;" and our Laurence, now nearly twenty years old, was to enter on a new shape of life. Here was to be a wider sphere wherein to develop his Shandean humours: something different from the Halifax little men and the blunt Yorkshire squires. The square, silent towers of Jesus College, sombre and monastic, whose bright vermilion brick face had gradually deepened into a dull brown umber, offered a pleasant retreat for the man of contemplative tastes. In the centre of the Quadrangle was a famous walnut-tree, familiar to all men of that college, and which still flourishes. Even then it spread out its branches and cast a shadow upon the students' windows; and long after, Mr. Hall, whose windows, as well as his friend Sterne's, were darkened by the foliage, made merry on this famed tree.

"At Cambridge, many a year ago,
In Jesus was a walnut-tree,
The only thing it had to show,
The only thing folks went to see.

"Being of such a size and mass,
And growing in so wise a College,
I wonder how it came to pass
It was not called the Tree of Knowledge." *

It was reputed to be the most quiet of all the colleges, and lay within a few yards of the river and its green banks. One who saw it only twenty years

* Works of J. Hall Stevenson. In the "Délices de la Grande Bretagne" is a bird's-eye view of Jesus College, showing this famous walnut-tree, as it appeared almost at the very time Mr. Sterne was there.

later, describes it with the wistful appreciation of a scholar:—"The fellows' garden has pleasant and extensive walks, meadows, and grass; and the rural situation on the banks of the Cam makes it an agreeable place, being out of the noise and hurry of the town, and so the more proper for a place of study." * Now it is the most picturesque of all the Cambridge colleges, and has a soft and shady approach through an avenue of trees; and the chapel, where Mr. Sterne went daily for prayers, has a venerable air, and shows the old walls and roof wherein the Benedictines used to chant office.

Here, too, was a library, not very extensive, yet curious, furnished with some two hundred manuscripts, some rare, early printed books, and works of the odd, scarce description bibliophilists love. Here was to be seen a priceless typographical gem—almost unique—to be handled tenderly when taken down and shown to the curious stranger. No other, indeed, than that Black-letter life of Saint Radegunde, printed by Pynson—a treasure almost inestimable, and to be found marked with three *R.*'s in the catalogues. Of this typographical pearl Doctor Farmer, who presented it, was heard to remark, that "though he had been for many years in search of pieces of this sort, he did not know that another copy existed in the world"—a fact which the young undergraduate could heartily appreciate. For we know how he esteemed that precious Bruscambille which Mr.

* Carter: "History of the University of Cambridge," p. 220.

Shandy, by one of those turns of fortune, which now and again cheer the truffle-hunters of the bookstalls, lighted on and secured for no more than "three half-crowns." There "are not three Bruscambilles in Christendom," said the stall-man, "except what are chained up in the libraries of the curious."* And possibly the Black-letter Saint Radegunde was chained up in that library of the curious, which was in the quiet Cambridge college. He found a society here of some sixty to eighty members; and that he looked back to these associations with satisfaction, some testimony is to be found in the fact that he sent young Tristram Shandy to the same seat of learning. Mr. Shandy confounded the professors by his instinctive familiarity with the principles of logic. "I well remember when he went up with me to enter my name at Jesus College . . . . it was a matter of wonder with my worthy tutor and two or three fellows of that learned society, &c."† That "worthy tutor" under whose direction young Sterne was placed, has come down to us as the Reverend Mr. Cannon,‡ of the same college; who, however, could have left no tokens of professorial training upon

* A dainty little exemplar of this rare work is marked in London catalogues, not at "three half-crowns," but at three guineas.

† There is a passage in the "Sentimental Journey" where he speaks a little contemptuously of the universities who supply "travelling doctors"—Oxford, Aberdeen, and Glasgow—but spares Cambridge.

‡ The Reverend Doctor Corrie, the present Master of Jesus College, has kindly taken the trouble of searching his registers for these dates and particulars relating to Sterne's residence.

the mind of his pupil: for within a year or two —in 1734 or 1735—he slipped from the steady ladder of University preferment, and died at his college rooms.

In the course of his first year he read for a sizarship, and obtained it on the 6th of July, 1733. This, though only worth from ten to fifteen pounds, is an indication of some parts and industry. Again, that little chronicle before alluded to, which was supplied to the morning papers, furnishes us with a hint of the part he played while wearing the undergraduate's gown. All along his course, and in whatever disguise, we can track him by that irregular and spasmodic gait, opposed to all steady-plodding notions, and which betokens, so significantly, that the Cervantic humours are presently to break out. At the University, says this little *Morning Post* sketch, "he spent the usual number of years; read a great deal, laughed more, and sometimes took the diversion of puzzling his tutors. He left Cambridge with the character of an odd man, who had no harm in him, and who had parts, if he would use them." An odd-looking, as well as an odd man, of a shrunk, restless figure, whose outline was to be seen through that regulation gown like an anatomy. It was at Cambridge that he had the first of those attacks—the breaking of a blood-vessel in his chest—which clung to him steadily all the rest of his life. He had a narrow escape, and recollected it long after. And it must be borne in mind, when we come to weigh any shortcomings,

what frail, feeble frames his parents furnished to their young family; and how he only, and the scapegrace sister, as she may be called, escaped shipwreck out of all the little craft, Devijehers, Jorams, and the rest, that put out to sea with him. There was a fatal cough which clung to him perseveringly all through, and was the Old Man of the Sea of his life. Further on, this cough tormentor, and the brittle nature of the bloodvessels in his chest, were to take their place as the regular established irritants of his days and nights.

In this agreeable retreat, then, "he read a great deal, and, as was very truly said, "laughed more" at what he read. Nearly twenty years later we find he has not left off laughing at what he had read. For, pleasantly satirizing the old pedantic classbooks, which were common to Oxford and Cambridge alike, he makes Mr. Shandy "have never, during his whole life, the least light or spark of subtility struck into his mind by one single lecture upon *Crackenthorp* or *Burgersdicius*, or any *Dutch* logician or commentator;" which "Dutch commentator" has been, more lately, niched into the pillory of "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers." Mr. Shandy had that wonderful, instinctive art, which comes not by teaching, and yet is as effective. "And yet, 'tis strange, he had never read *Cicero*, nor *Quinctilian de Oratore*, among the ancients; nor *Vossius*, nor *Skioppius*, nor *Ramus*, nor *Fornaby*, among the moderns." The Aristotelian phrases of the school cling very closely to

Mr. Sterne's memory. Mr. Shandy was, indeed, "θεοδίδακτος—born an orator."

He did not love those logical memories too well, and had but a poor opinion of intellectual gymnastics with Barbara and Celarent. Neither had he forgotten those dreary pieces of mechanism known as "Books of Topics," or "Topica," by which composition was to be made a handicraft, and an essay written, as some Easterns say their prayers, by the turning of a handle: for "every word by this means, you see, is converted into a thesis or hypothesis, every thesis and hypothesis have an offspring of propositions, and each proposition has its own consequences and conclusions. 'The force of this engine,' added my father, 'is incredible in opening a child's head.'—''Tis enough, Brother Shandy,' cried my Uncle Toby" (delightful always, and full of wisdom, are the comments of this retired officer) "'*to burst it into a thousand splinters!*'" Nor did he soon forget the use of those terrible instruments —"the ten predicaments;" but he should have recollected the "Summa Logicæ," written by his great episcopal ancestor.

Even at this time had been remarked the comparative neglect of classical studies, for which the university has since been noted. "I see them fallen into great contempt with most people here," writes Gray; and then adds, how he has "endured" lectures on the mathematics and "other college impertinences. It is very possible two and two make four, but I would not give four farthings to

demonstrate this ever so clearly; and if these be the profits of life, give me the amusements of it." And then the poet falls into a lugubrious description of Cambridge life and society, which he likens to the Babylon described by the prophet—"The wild beasts of the desert shall dwell there, and their houses shall be the abode of doleful creatures, and owls shall build there, and satyrs shall dance there; their forts and towers shall be a den for ever—a joy for wild asses."

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH.

FAMILIARS AND ASSOCIATES.

Of his friends and companions at his entrance into "this learned society" but little is known. The registers disclose that the curiously small number of three postulants received their degree with him; who may, therefore, be fairly assumed to have entered Jesus College at the same time, and to have sat at commons with him all through the course. Their names are Frederick Keller (hereafter a fellow and benefactor of his college, and rector of a living in Herts), Peter Torriano, and Thomas Moulds—of whom nothing is known, and who may have died ingloriously, without livings or fellowships. There might have, also, been pointed out to Mr. Sterne a youth of serious habits and Methodist leanings, who was hereafter to bring out a well-meant but feeble copy of the wonderfully popular work, "The Whole Duty of Man," which had been accepted as the work of Archbishop Sterne. The author of "The Compleat Duty of Man" must have just arrived as Mr. Sterne was about taking his degree.

"'Twas there," says Mr. Sterne to his daughter

Lydia, "that I commenced a friendship with Mr. H., which has been most lasting on both sides." Lasting, certainly, and faithful; yet, unhappily, anything but profitable to one of the parties. For under this initial is hidden away the name of John Hall, afterwards JOHN HALL STEVENSON, who lives in "Tristram Shandy" as *Eugenius*;—a name inseparable from Sterne's, and which must have an important share assigned to it in anything that affects to deal with the life of the humourist. In this small university sphere he does not emerge at all, but will later stand forward more conspicuously, in his own county of Yorkshire—a gay-spirited youth, whom Mr. Cole, the antiquary, remembered. "Mr. Hall," he says, "I recollect well at college, where he was an ingenious young gentleman, and in person very handsome." An "ingenious young gentleman" often stood for one who could turn a *double entendre* with ease and elegance, or who could sheath tawdry allusions in neat and sprightly phrase. It had been far better that Mr. Sterne had never met this agreeable collegian. But there was here a man of greater mark, who would seem to have entered and taken his degree much about the same time. The reserved and classic author of "The Bard" and "The Elegy" was to be seen walking about the courts, and haunting the Cambridge libraries. Shifting his quarters from Peterhouse to Pembroke, to avoid the rioting of certain "young men of fortune" who lived in the rooms underneath, he was not likely to have relished

the society of the Sterne-Stevenson coterie; and far more enjoyed addressing correct Latin verses to his friend West, under the Della Cruscan title of Favonius. Favonius used to reply with chaste Latin versicles, addressed to Glaucus. How merry would Tristram and his set have been over this elegant interchange, had it reached their ears! This famous poet was even then beginning to tire of what he called "the quiet ugliness" of the place, and yet clung to it for many years; but from the want of recognition evident in his mention of "Tristram Shandy's" success long after, it is plain he did not recal his fellow-undergraduate.

But a few years later and he would have met here, getting ready for the Church, that youth who was also to become a fashionable London parson, nearly as much in vogue as Mr. Sterne himself—who was to preach hypocritical sermons, and indite trashy verses to "Lady N——, on her not attending at the Magdalen," and who was finally to scandalize the town and his patrons by a shameful crime, and an expiation by the hangman's rope? And though—the one being of Clare and other of Jesus—the two future clergymen (both instances of that luckless fitting the round mundane nature into the square and angular hole of ordination) could not have brushed gowns; still, this notorious Doctor Dodd was later to address Tartuffe verses of tender expostulation, with all the freedom of a friend, to the author of demoralizing "Tristram."

With these associations he entered upon his course. That he passed through with more than respectability may be assumed from the record of his distinctions; though some of these bore what might be called an *ex*-officio character. It has been seen that, on June the 6th, 1733, he was admitted a sizar. Further, on July the 30th of the following year, he was elected a scholar of the college, on Archbishop Sterne's foundation. Though this honour might be fairly assumed to be a family compliment, still it could not have been paid in the face of any glaring deficiency. Down at Mansfield, in Nottinghamshire, the cradle of the Yorkshire Sternes, and where the Archbishop passed his childhood, was a certain ancient free-school, endowed by Elizabeth; and this establishment had actually two scholarships, of the yearly value of ten pounds, at Jesus College. There does appear some sort of connexion between the scholarship which Laurence was elected to, and which the Archbishop founded, and the Mansfield scholarship, where the Archbishop was born.

It is, on the other hand, well understood at the two great English Universities, that family ties help powerfully to reach certain fellowships, and such agreeable annuities; and that near relationship to a deceased benefactor of eminence is a claim irresistible to these fair college endowments, if supported by any reasonable display of diligence and ability. It is considered at Jesus College, by those of the present generation, that one so hand-

somely furnished with testimonials of consanguinity as Mr. Sterne was, could scarcely have escaped a fellowship; therefore, it is likely that the boyish Shandean fitfulness, now more strongly developed, interfered. That "laughing at tutors" is not acceptable in high places—irreverent scholastics being always regarded with a mixed feeling of awe and repugnance. That "reading much," too, does not seem to be pointed specially to the classics of the regular curriculum, but to refer to a wider and more irregular field. So that it is likely the old story came true once more, and he was passed by in the race by the slower university tortoises.

The last year of his residence was marked by some little ferment and flutter; for his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales was then about to be married, and the Royal University furnished a volume of academic effusions in honour of the event. But it does not appear that the "Cambridge Collection of Verses" contained anything Shandean. Two years later, there came a ferment of another order, when "Orator" Henley, and his "Gilt Tub," threatened a visit; the authorities issuing terrible edicts against schismatical congregations, and creating "half-a-dozen little Proctorlings" to do police on the occasion.* Young Sterne, of Jesus, would have relished profoundly this mountebank, who was himself in an humble degree of the Order of Shandeans.

Very little more will exhaust what may be told

* Gray's Letters, Sept., 1738.

of this portion of Sterne's life, a period, with all men, usually barren; and when fertile in details, of but small value, because a state of dependence and undevelopment. Being still one of the undistinguished rank-and-file, no one, for years to come, shall dream of putting by his letters. Except, indeed, two poor trusting women who love him, and, with the old female faith, have no concern whether he shall be ever higher or lower in this world;—a curious exception. Sir Walter Scott has remarked this utter wreck of all the Sterne letters during the twenty or thirty years of his obscurity; but he did not know of this one more signal manifestation of woman's affection. It only remains, then, to tell that on the 29th of March, 1735, he matriculated; and that in the January of the following year, he took his Bachelor's degree. He is now free of the University, and is not likely to take with him into the world that sort of social furnishing which a titled Master of the Elegances shall, by-and-by, write to his son, that *he* received from the same Alma Mater.

On the 6th of March, 1736, the Most Reverend Richard Reynolds, D.D., Bishop of Lincoln, was ordaining deacons at Buckden, in Huntingdonshire; and among the candidates was one who had come from Jesus College, Cambridge. This postulant was a thin, spare, hollow-chested youth, with joints and members but ill-kept together; with curiously bright eyes, and a Voltairean mouth. About that mouth and eye there was no very

special air of sanctity; and the name of the new deacon was said to be one Laurence Sterne, B.A., from Yorkshire. Previously, his University had granted to him the usual testimonials for Orders, which were dated on the 28th of February, 1736. Finally, at the quaint and almost Shandean town of Chester, it may be mentioned in anticipation, on the 20th of August, 1738, he was ordained priest, by Dr. Samuel Peploe, then Bishop of Chester, and became the Reverend Laurence Sterne.*

A day of doubtful omen as regards the course of his future life—an unfortunate step, which shall colour his whole coming career: for even those who shall hereafter judge of him most charitably, cannot but own that he was radically unfitted for the serious office he had chosen, and that he was but fitting sacred fetters on his nature, which would embarrass his motions at every step. In his nature there was far too much mercurial vitality for it to fall, by the sheer force of routine, into the hackneyed duties of his profession; which, after a short struggle, would have been the result with more ordinary minds. Now was to begin for him a ceaseless struggle—his gown clinging to him like an ecclesiastical shirt of Nessus, and hampering him as he tries to turn; until at last, weary with the constant labour, he rends it into shreds, and trips along the highways and open streets without shame.

* His Letters of Ordination will soon be seen by the public, among the curiosities of the British Museum.

With him it was no worse than with many of his cloth, upon whom a sort of destiny, rather than their own choice, has thrust the surplice; but who, with a humdrum mediocrity, could decently adapt themselves to its straightness. But with these wild irregulars—these *mousseux* temperaments—"with us, you see, the case is quite different;" for "instead of the cold phlegm and exact regularity of sense and humours you would have looked for, he was, on the contrary, as mercurial and sublimated a composition—as heteroclite a creature in all his declensions—with as much life and whim, *gaieté de cœur*, about him, as the kindliest climate could have engendered. With all this sail, poor Yorick carried not one ounce of ballast; he was utterly unpractised in the world, and at the age of twenty-six knew just about as well how to steer his course in it as a romping, unsuspicious girl of nineteen." This was the newly-fashioned priest, "carrying not one ounce of ballast," and also within a few months of his twenty-sixth year; which does indeed seem as though the picture were intended for this date of his entry upon sacerdotal life.

But there were inducements, sufficient and substantial in a certain point of view, which hurried our new clergyman into his profession. It is not given to all men to have a primate ancestor a few branches up the family tree; or a wealthy cousin, with broad lands and local influence, who has promised to be a "father to them;" or a swelling ecclesiastical uncle, busy and bustling and political.

The Reverend Laurence did no more than many of his fellows; but his misfortune was having that "mercurial and sublimated composition within him," and that unlucky deficit in the matter of ballast.

CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH.

"JAQUES STERNE, LL.D.," AND YORKSHIRE POLITICS.

We may now introduce that uncle to whom allusion has just been made—a characteristic figure, that stands out boldly and racily, like one of Fielding's men and women—the son of Simon Sterne, Esquire, of Elvington, and the brother next in order to Lieutenant Roger. He bore that Christian name in compliment to the handsome fortune his mother had brought into the family. Out of so many, one was surely a small holocaust to the Church; and when Richard, Roger, Mary, Elizabeth, and Francis, all went the way of the world, it was not too much to ask one for a holier walk of life. Besides, he was a generation nearer to the archiepiscopal fountain, and on the right hand and on the left are strong substantial props in the shape of territorial uncles.

By some quaint chance or oddity, this divine turns up everywhere—in trees, pedigrees, and preferments—as "Jaques Sterne, LL.D.," with those letters of honour pertinaciously adhering to him: not "D.D.," which would seem the more customary letters of honour for a clergyman. This glory makes his name always stand out with a sort of

Pangloss air. Look where we will in the crowd of Sternes, huddled together, Jaques Sterne, LL.D., flashes on us conspicuously. It is likely that this is but a type of his real position and dignity among the members of the family: he must have been the pride of the house—their *decus columenque rerum*. He can be seen almost at this distance, a florid, bustling, busy clergyman, portly and substantial; and hurrying by to the music of his rustling gown, flapping like the sails and cordage of a ship. He is known to have been a fighting Whig and a fierce zealot, and on these two strong wings had soared to promotion. He was fast becoming one of the most eminent pluralists of his day, when death stepped in awkwardly and cut him short.

A vehement politician of the ripe old ascendancy order, in times when Toryism was perilous, and Whiggism profitable and rampant; when the politics of the winning side were carried on as it were by martial law. This tempestuous clergyman flung himself with ardour into all the battles of the period, and did good service at the Yorkshire elections, like a true ecclesiastical *condottiere*. With such a militant patron it would have been affectation in Laurence to have shrunk from the Church.

Even while Laurence is on the eve of his deaconship, this turbulent cleric is hard at work in the very heat of an election broil. He rises to the surface of the tremendous Yorkshire contest of the year 1734, when the two parties of that vast con-

stituency met at the hustings and shivered their lances in one of the most desperate party-struggles on record. Mr. William "Poultney," or Pulteney, who has been sitting for the county undisturbed since 1705, has been seduced away, dazzled by the metropolitan charms of the County Middlesex; and four candidates rush to seize the vacant seats—namely, Sir M. Stapylton, Mr. Chomley Turner of Kirkleatham, Sir Rowland Wynne, and Mr. Edward Wortley Montagu, husband to the famous Lady Mary. The battle spread over six whole days, and resulted in the victory of the first and second candidates—yet by narrow majorities. Where the three first candidates polled some eight thousand electors each, a difference of a hundred and fifty between the successful and the beaten candidates was almost inappreciable. In these days, when the humours of disaffection were gathering slowly, and the Pretender's rebellion only ten years away, it may be well conceived how bitter was the strife, and how much bad blood was being fermented. The weaker side were written down disloyal men—vile Jacobites, who would bring over the Pretender, introduce Popery and wooden shoes. We can hearken to "Jaques Sterne, LL.D.," writing excitedly to "Chomley Turner, Esquire," as to the tactics of the fight:—

"Sir," says this stirring divine, "I have been with Mr. Poultney's agent again this morning, and he has promised to engage as many of his friends as he can in your interest; and shall call upon Sir

Francis Boynton to beg he will strengthen him. I beseech it, we may carry on this smoothly; for if we show the least jealousy (for which, when matters are explained, I hope there is no occasion) it will have a bad effect. You may believe me, sir, with the strongest attachment that is possible for any man, to be your most faithful, obedient servant,

"Friday morning. J. STERNE."

It is clear this political divine was heart and soul in the business. He had been again with the late member's agent, and he was to wait on Sir Francis, who was Recorder of Beverly. Finally, in a transport of electioneering enthusiasm, he assures his patron of "the strongest attachment that is possible for any man to have"—a burst which only the rapture of successful canvassing can excuse.* The poll-book of this famous battle is still in the Sterne family.

That this contest was no more than a screen behind which the parties fought out their battle of Tory and Whig ascendancy, is evident from a graphic picture of Yorkshire politics, given in a rare pamphlet, not to be found in the National Museum. Dr. Burton there tells the story of his own personal griefs—an amusing episode, to be introduced later; but incidentally the Yorkshire electioneering intrudes, and furnishes a background of good warm colouring.

On the return of Sir Miles Stapylton and the

* Mr. William Durant Cooper, F.S.A., has discovered this letter among the Turner papers at Kirkleatham.

defeat of Sir Rowland Wynne, there were especial rejoicings at Wakefield; where the populace exhibited their triumph, by the unusual course of chairing—not the victorious candidate, but "a person to represent him, and carried him through the town, hurraing and showing their joy." This demonstration exasperated the defeated party; and it would appear that a sort of riot followed, in which only members of the Tory mob were arrested and brought before excited Whig magistrates, who had a monopoly of the bench. For some, bail was accepted; others were there and then consigned to the House of Correction. This spirit was not abated for long after; if any Tory voter applied for redress to the bench of magistrates, he was told, with pleasant mockery, "to go to Sir Miles," and be relieved by him. It was insinuated that this desperate bench of magistrates even strove to get certain tools of theirs elected churchwardens, in order that they might have the sacrament-money to spend upon political purposes. In this nefarious plot "a certain D.D." had a finger. During that York election, these authorities sat at an hotel, and had lists of doubtful voters' debts and liabilities made out, which were artfully used as instruments of pressure on their consciences. And here, again, "a certain Dr. was mostly chairman—being an active and almost constant attendant of this *worthy* committee: as indeed he generally was wherever he found any mischief afoot—which seldoms fails to be the case

where the lower class of the clergy are permitted to intrude." Again, at the great county election, a certain parish was pressed to vote for the ruling party, but declined; when "a little reverend timeserving P.—st" threatened to demolish their church, and make them build a new one—which clearly points to Dr. Sterne.

There is also another villain in the piece, "a certain Doctor of Laws who is not a priest," who made himself active in that threat of demolishing the church; and who from the context appears to have been a Doctor Braithwaite, whose sister the "reverend timeserving Pr—st" had married. Thus, incidentally, are we becoming acquainted with all Laurence Sterne's relations.

But it brought with it a fitting reward. The political patrons were not unmindful of their servant when they came into power, and benefices accumulated on his happy head. "Mitres" did not indeed "rain down" upon it, as luckless Yorick dreamt of; but on the whole he was not ill recompensed. The roll of his dignities reads handsomely. He was a Canon Residentiary, a Prebendary, and Precentor of York Cathedral—the precentorship coming to him in the year 1735, by way of guerdon for the election services of the preceding year. He is besides Rector of Rise, and Rector of Hornsea-cum-Ritson, in the East Riding—offices slender, it must be confessed, in their emoluments, but still acceptable. By-and-by, in the year 1746, drops in the Archdeaconry of Cleveland; and ten years later, he

takes a spring over into another county—his Majesty "the King having been pleased to grant unto Jaques Sterne, LL.D., the place and dignity of Second Prebendary in the Cathedral church of Durham." Finally, in 1750, another pluralist dying, Doctor Dering, who was both Dean of Ripon and Archdeacon of the East Riding of Yorkshire, Doctor Wanley is promoted to the first dignity, and "Jaques Sterne, LL.D." (as he is still set out in the morning prints of the time), to the second.

In these latter capacities he had an opportunity of addressing "Charges" to the clergy of his districts—lengthy documents printed in quarto, and models of inflammatory hortatives. It is almost confounding, at this distance of time, to read over these masterpieces of religious intolerance—these stimulants to peace and goodwill on earth, and neighbourly love, which, however, it is only justice to "Jaques Sterne, LL.D.," to say, were not confined to his special instance. The pious streams that flowed from the pulpit about this date are all tainted with this uncharitable leaven. There is an unblushing ignoring of the mere humdrum Sunday topics, and a plain, outspeaking dealing with worldly topics, all through these curious harangues. That discourse of the Dean of St. Paul's, nearly half a century before, on the occasion of the murder of Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey, gives some scandal to those who love the decencies in Church matters; but these of 1745 are still more strange, and show how the fierce personal politics of the time were seething

and frothing in the very pulpits. Did preferment come rapidly for that "Reverend Robert Dagge, M.A., Rector of Stoke Abbot," who preached an edifying assize sermon in 1746, before "Mr. Justice Clive and Mr. Serjeant Prime," on this very "awakening" text—"PROTEUS; or, the Jesuit detected in every shape! a character of the Duke likewise attempted"? A strange composition, sprinkled with stories of the Maria Monk order, and respectfully laid at the feet of "The Duke." For in those times, as in our own recently, there was "The Duke," the special Duke, the property of the public; with one-half of the nation the Saviour and Deliverer—with the other, the Butcher Cumberland. When the Jesuits are finished with, the character of the Hero is then "attempted."

In that very same year, with the embers of the 'Forty-five barely tramped out, the Reverend "Jaques Sterne, LL.D.," also an admirer of the Duke, addresses his clergy on "The dangers arising to our civil and religious liberty, from the great increase of Papists, and the setting up public schools and seminaries for the teaching and educating of youth in the pernicious tenets and principles of Popery, considered: in a charge delivered to the clergy of the Archdeaconry of Cleveland"—dedicated to Thomas, Lord Archbishop of York. In this work he brings together a very readable compendium of all the "Popish" laws, of tolerable severity then, but which he insinuates were scarcely of sufficient stringency; and he encourages his

hearers to "oppose a superstition in your district, no less formidable for the numbers who have been seduced into it, than for the rank, fortune, and influence of some of its leading votaries." A palpable allusion to some of his Yorkshire neighbours, that county being always notorious for the "rank, fortune, and influence" of its Roman Catholic inhabitants.

What personal exertions he made during the eventful '45 year, in the City of York, in the cause of law and order, will be shown a little farther on. These are yet to come, with their fitting reward. But these hints will be sufficient to introduce the noisy, bustling clergyman, "Jaques Sterne, LL.D.," who was now to play potent patron to Laurence, and lend him all his interest. He waits for his nephew, does this important clergyman; no doubt he has promised to look after "the lad's" interests. Meanwhile our new deacon—for he is not to receive "full orders" for two years to come—leaves Cambridge behind him, and comes to York.

CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH.

OLD YORK.

The old York city to which Mr. Sterne came, over a hundred years ago, was not very different from that nineteenth-century York—rather dingy and rococo—at which the express, flying north, halts to dine. It has now a rather decayed and abandoned look, as though the world generally were in the habit of taking after the pattern of that Northern Express, and making it no more than a mere city of call. The houses and streets seem old enough to be shabby, yet not sufficiently antique to be venerable. A sort of commercial air takes the place of the old genteel respectability, breaking out in a dazzling show of new shop-frontage and splendid grocery development. The great families—the salt of the country—no longer "come in" for the season, taking one of those broad-shouldered red-brick houses, with an air of comfort, which now stand in sorrowful ranks in most country towns,—but are whirled away southward by the fatal express. There is no season proper; but at times it flashes out with the rare festivity of a ball, and the county families pour in fiercely, the hotels fill, and the Old York glories live once more.

Still there are quarters whence the sacred bloom of quaint antiquity has not yet been brushed away. There are the four rustic, crumbling tower-gates, with their quaint belongings—those "Bars" of "Micklegate," and other names, by which the city is entered; through one or other of which, thinks the stranger who would link the present to the past, must have entered the Reverend Laurence, in his yellow postchaise, clattering under the archway—just where the shrill scream of the engine close upon the left, behind that tottering gabled inn, "The Windmill," wakes him up into prosy life. Old prints—very yellow and ravelled at the edges—still preach to us how quaint and picturesque were portions of this old York city. Very Dutch-like were those scraps and patches of old building that grew out of the banks, and were washed and lime-covered by the river. The steep, hill-shaped bridge which spanned the "Ouze," and which Marmaduke Rawdon's biographer called "the fairest arche in England," with a grim old building at one end for the "Great Council Chambers," a dismal-looking bastion on the other, and the felon's jail underneath, looked a sort of provincial Rialto. It was, indeed, named with the famous Venice Bridge. Still flourished, too, almost without a soil or speck, the glorious York epic, pure and brilliant—the Great Minster; and about it all those little, quiet, winding streets and lanes, those closes and corners, where canons and such holy persons most do congregate. Those courts of low-roomed, two-storied houses, with accommoda-

tion in the roof, and brass knockers on bright-green doors—crustacea which are usually found adhering to the sides of ecclesiastical minsters—seem still enjoying a mild and dispiriting flavour of antiquity.

But in these days of young Sterne's arrival, the old cathedral town was very gay. At the proper seasons of the year it overflowed with the county families, and the ecclesiastical gentlemen, and their ladies, connected with the cathedral society. Specially, when the York Races came round, and the theatrical season set in, and high military authorities arrived, the elements for pleasant society could not have been wanting. For "The ladies of York"—says one who had often seen brilliant files of them filling the box tiers, while he was playing the *Minor*, and 'giving tea' to very 'genteel houses'—"without any compliment, have a grace, a manner, a decorum, not often met with out of the metropolis (Bath excepted); for York certainly boasts a pre-eminence, when the boxes on public weeks are crowded, that dazzles the eyes of a stranger. And no wonder, for as London and Bath call the choicest beauties from the three kingdoms, so does ancient York city at times allure them from Hull, Leeds, Doncaster, Wakefield, Pontefract, and every part of that noble, spacious, and rich country. And I am free to declare, that the ladies of York (in my judgment) never show themselves to such advantage as when they fill the boxes of the York Theatre."* These entertainments did not lack the patronage of "Colonel Thornton,"

* Memoirs of Tate Wilkinson, vol. ii., p. 263.

Commandant of the York Militia, who, with the officers of that distinguished corps, would "bespeak a play," and the scarlet uniforms would cluster thickly in the boxes to see "Love à la Mode," and the "Mayor of Garrett." But there were yet grander nights, when his Royal Highness the Duke of York would come that way, and honour the theatre with a "command." On such occasions the narrow approaches would be blocked with the chairs of fashionable ladies, and flaming links;—a piece of magnificence which excited the incredulity and derisive merriment of the more fashionable ladies in London, who doubted if a mere provincial town could be so forward in the refinement. Indeed, the popular metropolitan estimation of this city was far from complimentary; it being customary with angry London menials, wishing each other evil, to bid each other "go to York!" instead of the coarser malediction which modern custom has adopted.

On a sort of winding promenade, along the river, was the York *Haute Volée* seen to cluster thick, finding air, exercise, and amusement. And there is to be found in the garrulous bibliographical rambles of Doctor Dibdin—prince of book epicures—a contemporaneous sketch of this diversion. We can see the ladies tripping along, in hats and Pompadour dresses, while the dandies and macaronies attend on them with a sort of simpering air. Behind, a burly ecclesiastic, in bands and flowing gown, and full-bottomed wig, typifies the necessary presence of the clerical element in all Yorkshire festivity.

In York, to this hour, the traveller may be driven to the "George"—a good house of entertainment, pervaded through and through by a fine ripe flavour of antiquity, but whose walls are a little dislocated, and lean like the famous tower. The grander Babel Inn, at the railway, has a new-world population of its own. The "George" was flourishing, and held out its loyal sign, when Mr. Sterne drove into York. And at the next election for that city, succeeding the memorable contest of 1734, when Sir Lister Kaye was returned, Mr. Thompson's committee, on the Whig interest, held their sittings at the "Loyal George Inn." And though there was an inn known as "Howard's, late Ringrove's," and the coffee-house called "Bluitt's," which were both in the Lendal quarter; yet, from the fact of his political uncle having presided over meetings at the former establishment, it is very likely that young Mr. Sterne, the nephew, favoured it with his patronage.

The animosity of the election feuds had not been laid when he arrived. No doubt his political uncle turned the new deacon's gifts to some profit: for there was a reward to come presently, almost as soon as he was ordained; and it was not likely that so shrewd and busy an intriguer would distribute his blessings except upon strict commercial principles. To such a busy agitator, a young man of good address, and with that air of the world which Mr. Sterne always possessed, would be highly useful.

CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH.

THE STERNE CONNEXIONS, AND "THE SEASON" AT YORK.

Elvington, where Squire Sterne lived, was within an easy ride of York, and was pleasantly situated, lying on a hill which overlooked the river Derwent. "Sometimes," says the quaint biographer of Marmaduke Rawdon, "he would goe to Elvington, five miles from York, a lordship belonging to his nephew, Squier Roger Jaques, close to which runneth the River Derwent, of which, as the lord of the manor, he haith the royaltie of the fishinge. Here he took much pleasure to see them fishe; the fishermen fishinge in little square leather bootes, which, when they had done fishing, the fishermen carry them home upon their backes to their homes. Here they catch good store of salmon." A pleasant bit of Old-English scenery. Mr. Sterne himself loved fishing, and no doubt often cast his line for the Elvington salmon.

But Squire Richard Sterne the First—the hospitable entertainer of Ensign Roger, the subscriber to Shakspeare, and husband of two wives—had been laid in his family-vault. He died early in the Octo-

ber of the year that Laurence was sent to the university, leaving it a little doubtful whether it was he himself or his successor that became "a father" to Laurence, and so bountifully "sent" him to the university. However, it is plain that "my Cousin Sterne of Elvington" is responsible for the charges of the years succeeding at the university. Great changes had taken place on that demise, and two distinct groups of children by different wives were left without a father: young Richard—now the new squire—twenty-five years of age, and his sister Mary, by the first; Dorothy—a blooming young woman of twenty-five—by the second; also Frances and Timothy, children of sixteen and eleven years old respectively. The disposition, however, made by Squire Richard was very equitable. Elvington was to remain with the senior branch; and Woodhouse, his other mansion, and estate of Woodhouse, was to pass to Timothy, as representative of the junior line.

Between Woodhouse and Elvington stretched nearly fifty miles of country. It lay close to the great manufacturing town of Halifax, charmingly situated in the valley of the grand Yorkshire river of the Calder. On the hill opposite is to be still seen a quaint and venerable manor, known as Benroyd—a bit of reduced gentility, with decayed tokens of better days, but now degraded into a farmhouse. Here, too, is a huge corn-mill, known to the neighbours as "Sterne's Mill." For the Sternes are not now to be found at Woodhouse,

which has passed to another family—the family of the Norris's. But they still keep the family pictures and relics, and family papers, which they have been eager in putting at the service of one who would speak for their famous ancestor. The old mansion may now be seen hale and blooming, and still shows the date of its erection—A.D. 1595. Elvington, too, no longer remains in the family. It came to Richard, son to Laurence's cousin (in the *strict* sense), and by him was sold. He married a Miss Waine of Beverley, and dying childless in the year 1791, at the age of fifty-one, that branch became extinct. The mourning ring of Miss Waine, who became Mrs. Sterne, still remains.

The children of the late squire seem all to have married advantageously. Dorothy, Laurence's cousin, was presently to marry Mr. William Lister, of Horton Hall, close to Bradford—a gentleman of good station and some political importance. A good match—as, indeed, all the Sternes were in the habit of making, with the exception of poor Lieutenant Roger's improvident branch. Later on, in 1758, when Mr. Bonnell Thornton is standing for the City of York, Lord Rockingham—not yet prime minister, but gifted with the most fascinating manners and disposition,—writes from York to beg that "Mr. Lister will secure for his friend Mr. Thornton" all the votes of such freemen as might be in his neighbourhood. As good an alliance, but in a civic direction, was that of his cousin Frances, Mrs. Lister's sister, to Mr. Jeremiah Rawson, an

alderman of Bradford, who had well-nigh reached to the glories of the civic chair. She and her husband lived in great state at their manor-house in Bradford for a portion of the year; then came to York, like other families of consideration, for the winter gaieties. By her husband, Alderman Jeremiah, she was left mistress of vast estates, and of a splendid country-seat, known as Nidd Hall, where she ruled till her death. This lady could have told to any hale old gentleman of our time many things concerning her cousin Laurence; for she was to be seen in the year 1801, a forgotten relic left behind by the past century, of the ripe age of eighty-six. Some picturesque memories of her cling to the old manor-house at Bradford; and she is spoken of there, like a beruffed old picture, as "Madame Rawson."

Another cousin (Mary) was Mrs. Pulleyne of Burley Hall, in the Bradford district, also destined to become an octogenarian. Young Mr. Sterne must have seen this wedding, for it took place in the year 1739; and Doctor Jaques Sterne, Precentor of York Cathedral, could spare a few moments from his politics to sign the settlements in a fine bold hand. They also came up to York for the season. Mr. Pulleyne, whose name has a fresh Old-English ring, was a person of note among the squirearchy; and seems to have enjoyed or suffered the reputation of being a sort of Daniel Lambert of his county, for he was said to have weighed over twenty stone. Turning over the old family relics and treasures,

we come upon the nuptial waistcoat of this gentleman, stupendous in its amplitude, and still dazzling with its golden embroidery. Here, too, is a mass of yellow lace and rich decoration, somewhat faded, which was the bridal garment of Mrs. Pulleyne, and represented a costly outlay. Coming on such relics as these, we almost look for a mouldy bride-cake, and a decayed marriage-feast, with which the mice have been busy, and a ghostly Miss Havisham, sitting up in spectral splendour. Did Laurence ever stumble here on the old archiepiscopal trunk — Archbishop Richard's — dust-covered and mildewed, with its brass nails fixed into the shape of "R. E." (Richard Ebor.), which once lay in the attics at Woodhouse, and which may have hinted to him that more precious chest—my Uncle Toby's Campaigning Trunk?

Every December the Pulleyne family set forth from Burley Hall for the grand annual migration to York—not without a certain state, and air of Grand Seigneur: for the Burley lands had come to the Pulleynes from the old Fairfax family, and there was hanging on the walls a picture of the stern old General Fairfax; and in their armoury were swords, Andrea Ferraras, with which the grim Cromwellian had smote the Royalist tribe of Ahab. Of such curiously hostile traditions was this Sterne family the centre—uniting memories of the notorious soldier of the Protector, as well as of the archbishop who had attended Laud to the scaffold, and melted down the Cambridge plate for the Royal

Martyr. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Sterne family, when this republican alliance was proposed, should have stoutly set their faces against it; and the tradition is still kept alive of this vehement opposition, triumphantly overcome, like all opposition in matters nuptial.

We can almost travel in this stately progress as they make their two-days' journey, with four family horses, from Burley to York, halting for the night at Collingham, passing by Harewood Castle, through some of the prettiest Yorkshire country. The order of their stages, and the cost of posts, and other charges ("turnpike, 2*s.* 6*d.*") may be still read in a memorandum-book kept by that careful lady, Mrs. Pulleyne. Then they took their place with distinction in the Faubourg St. Germain of York, and usually stayed until the first week of June.

When young Timothy, the heir of Woodhouse, grew up, he married one Miss Wigglesworth, whose name sounds inharmonious after the more melodious ring of the Listers and Pulleynes, which his relation had brought into the family. She had been most likely selected for the sort of charms that found favour with Tony Lumpkin; for young Timothy was of the spendthrift roystering order, and scattered the gatherings of his long minority in royal fashion. He took to racing; and we hear of a famous horse of his, known as "Candlebark," conspicuous at York and Doncaster. "Candlebark," and other extravagances, soon swept away large portions of the Woodhouse property; and before all was gone

his career was suddenly cut short at the age of twenty-nine. Him Laurence *must* have known, and would have relished his company. His portrait still remains with the family.

One of Laurence's aunts, who had married the Rev. Mr. Fairfax of Lincolnshire, fortified the family by a sort of connection with the titled house of that name; and the little piece of preferment which was to drop in to Mr. Sterne by his wife's interest, turns out to have been in the gift of Lord Fairfax, who might not have been indisposed to assist his new ecclesiastical relation. But there had been violent opposition in the family to this alliance, possibly on political grounds. A second aunt, Elizabeth, married Colonel Palliser, a good Yorkshire name, afterwards to become Irish; and a third, Mary, died unmarried the year after "Tristram Shandy" made its appearance. And most curious of all, just two years after the stamping out of that '45 insurrection, there was General Roger Handasyd, who seems likely to have been the original colonel of Lieutenant Roger, now sitting for Scarborough. He had no very long tenure—no longer than seven years; but he must have encountered the son of his old officer, who took many a flying visit to Scarborough, and who all his life found excellent company in soldiers.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTEENTH.

FIRST LOVE.

HERE were sufficient inducements to draw a gay young ecclesiastic to this northern capital. Neither could he be in difficulty for accommodation or lodging: for there was the house of his uncle, Mr. Precentor, in the Minster Yard—a bachelor establishment; and above all, there was to be found, up in Castlegate, the old mansion of the Sternes, whither came Richard Sterne, Esq., also for the carnival. It would go hard with Laurence if the generous host of Elvington could not make him out a room at Castlegate. Under whatever roof he may have established himself, he is destined to meet here one who will exercise some influence over his future life.

Some chance had brought a young Staffordshire lady to York, with whom Mr. Sterne becomes presently acquainted. Her name was Lumley; she came "of a good family in Staffordshire," and was daughter of the Rev. Mr. Lumley, Rector of Bedal. It is likely, too, that she was someway connected with a York family of the name (which would account, too, for her visit to that city); for Thoresby,

in his curiously minute diary, sets down how he travelled one day into York to see "my cousin Lumley." There were Lumleys, too, Earls of Scarborough. Did Mr. Sterne meet her at those famous York Races, which were said to draw strangers from all parts; or was it at those "Assembly Rooms"—that place of fashionable resort which recalls the faded glories of the "Wauxhall" at Spa, whose tarnished and rococo splendours are alive with memories of kings and princes? One who saw the York "Assembly House"—which was "principally built for the evening entertainment of the nobility and gentry that reside in the city and the parts adjacent," — at this very time, describes it enthusiastically "as a very grand and spacious building, designed in the Italian taste by the Earl of Burlington." We can conceive Mr. Sterne leading Miss Lumley of Staffordshire up that stately "Egyptian Hall, 123 feet in length and about 40 feet in breadth and height," which was allowed "to be inferior to no room in the kingdom, the Banqueting House at Whitehall alone excepted." These old courtly splendours are now fatally dimmed.

In this gay town, then, we see the figure of this Staffordshire lady, who was to furnish Laurence with the first of that train of sentimental passions which were to become almost constitutional with him. Her Christian name was Elizabeth. Mr. Sterne used to address her in his tender correspondence as "My L.;"* and a careless and affectionate

* "My Lumley" was quite the old-fashioned lover's style of address.

"Dear Bess," just slipped in at the close of a letter, is the only occasion on which he mentions her Christian name. She is said to have had "a fine voice," with "a good taste in music," which gift alone would have made her very acceptable to him; for, as will be seen later, he was a passionate worshipper of that art. It is likely that at this time she was more interesting than beautiful, which was destined to be the type of all Mr. Sterne's heroines. Looking at the picture of Lydia her daughter, and attempting to trace the mother's features there, is but a poor guide; for we see but a feminine reproduction, much softened and spiritualized, of the father's face, with that lurking humour and Voltairean sarcasm toned down into *espièglerie*.

It does not appear very distinctly in what precise year he became acquainted with her, but it seems most probable that it was shortly after his coming to York. It must be placed nearly as far back as that date, as their intimacy was spread over a good many years. For "at York I became acquainted with your mother, and courted her for two years;" then came the Staffordshire visit, which must have been of some length, for he "wrote to her often;" then follows the period of her return, when she fell ill of a lingering malady, slow of cure, and when, finally, "it pleased God that she recovered, and I married her, in 1741." For this acquaintance, and two years' courtship, and Staffordshire absence, and sickness and convalescence, a period of three or four years is necessary. They would seem to have

been much thrown together, and their intimacy ripened into a very deep and sentimental attachment. He was now, indeed, to suffer all the torments of a "delicate distress" (much in fashion in those days), and to be "smitten,"—as he is to write of another "affair," scarcely so justifiable,—"with the tenderest passion that human wight ever underwent." It may be doubted if Mr. Sterne was ever to undergo such genuine suffering hereafter: for now the bloom was on the rye, and his years but five-and-twenty. Those delicate sentimental fibres, to which he often makes allusion afterwards, by too constant usage get sadly worn; and a succession of the "tenderest passions that human wight ever underwent" must eventually deaden the heart.

This particular Lumley "*grande passion*" was honest, ardent, sincere, exaggerated, and, possibly, a little ridiculous: it almost seems to anticipate the amatory embarrassments of Werther and his Charlotte. But the age itself, it must be recollected, was fast drifting into that gentle current of tearful sensibility which kept possession of all fine ladies and gentlemen until the very end of the century. This sympathising anatomy of the affections, and careful dissection of all emotions of the heart, was to become a luxury of life, and to find its latest development in the comical sorrows of a Lady Betty in "False Delicacy," * and the more

* See Mr. Forster's amusing analysis of this comedy, in his admirable Life of Goldsmith;—a work which has not only exhausted its

gentlemanly agonies of Mr. Edgar Mandlebert. "Now was he to find out, let your reverences and worships say what you will of it," that love was "one of the most A-gitating, B-ewitching, C-onfounded, D-evilish affairs of life—the most E-xtravagant, F-utilious, G-alligaskinish, H-andy-dandyish, and L-yrical of all human passions;" with many more drawbacks, falling into regular alphabetical order. These torments, in the days of Miss Lumley's "tyranny,"—for it was a recognised part of the charms of a "mistress" to be "cruel" and tyrannical, and even "brutal," in the treatment of her slaves,—would scarcely have been dealt with so playfully, or hidden under such sportive conceits. Familiarity, and many scars, taught him at last to bear his sufferings with a happy unconcern. It must be said that he had no idea that the incidents of his *grande passion* were to be laid before the profane eyes of the public; which they were, nearly forty years afterwards, by the injudicious partiality of his daughter. "In justice," she says, bringing her father's love-letters before the world with this odd prologue—"in justice to Mr. Sterne's delicate feelings, I must here publish the following letters to Mrs. Sterne before he married her, when she was in Staffordshire. A good heart breathes in every line of them."

For nearly three years the affair was in progress. These were the days of Mr. Sterne's constancy.

subject, but left little to be said about any literary figure of Goldsmith's age.

The intimacy of the lovers was fostered by the tender aid and sympathy of a true confidante, necessary in all *affaires du cœur*. This lady—who someway recalls the gloomy mediatrix between Dora and David Copperfield—is, unhappily, only known to us as "The good Miss S——." But she seems to have done true and faithful service as mourner and consoler. It is impossible not to smile over the despair and anguish which waited on the various stages of this attachment, and over which Mr. Sterne himself, though he often "praised God for his sensibility," might afterwards have been merry enough.

He had a sort of rustic retreat outside York—"a little sungilt cottage on the side of a romantic hill," —to which they had given the fanciful name of "D'Estella." It seems to have been decorated with an abundant growth of "roses and jessamines," and was on the whole a very sweet place of resort for people in the state of mind the lovers then were. Miss Lumley had "lodgings" in York, where it would appear she resided by herself, and used to give little "quiet and sentimental repasts" to her lover. "Fanny" was the parlourmaid of the lodgings, who used to wait at the quiet and sentimental repasts; and she, with poor Miss S——, unknown to posterity, makes up the quartette of actors in the lovesick little piece. Long, long after —when Mr. Sterne had lived nearly all his life—it would seem as though the memory of these days had come back to him pleasantly: for he chris-

tened one of his Shandean characters "The Curate D'Estella."

For two years it went on. They were as "merry and as innocent as our first parents in Paradise, before the archfiend *entered that undescribable scene*." The roses and jessamines of D'Estella were to bloom perennially, when suddenly it went forth that "My L——" must return forthwith to Staffordshire; she must return to her sister Lydia, then or afterwards married to "The Rev. Mr. Botham, Rector of Albany, in Surrey, and Ealing, in Middlesex." The despair and anguish resulting in this step would appear to have been extraordinary and quite exceptional. Was this lady, wife of the "Rev. Mr. Botham," indisposed to countenance the further progress of the attachment, and about to play in a mitigated shape the part of "archfiend," and enter "upon that undescribable scene?" For, from being "as merry and as innocent as our first parents," they are on a sudden reduced to the depths of an unutterable anguish.

The way in which his emotions affected Mr. Sterne, if his own account be not exaggerated, was a little serious. Miss Lumley came out to "D'Estella," to have one last look at that enchanting retreat; and as soon as she had retired and the last farewells were exchanged, "he took to his bed, worn out by fevers of all kinds." Miss S——, the sympathising confidante, "from the forebodings of the best of hearts," was happily not far away; and seeing him in this condition, wisely and prudently insisted

on his making an effort, and getting up and coming to her house. And yet, perhaps, this step, though well-meant, was not so judicious at this moment, if her presence had that curious and dangerous effect on Mr. Sterne's feelings, which he embodies in a very natural question to his "charmer," viz.—"What can be the cause, my dear L., that I never have been able to see the face of this mutual friend but I feel myself *rent in pieces?*" He was induced to stay with her an hour, during which "short space" he would seem to have grown almost hysterical; for he "burst into tears a dozen different times," and was visited "with affectionate gusts of passion." In this critical state it may have flashed upon "Miss S——," that her presence might indeed be accountable for these symptoms: for she was presently "constrained to leave the room and *sympathise in her dressing-room;*" which delicious expression stands for a whole world of Rosa Matilda's distresses and sentimental associations, as embodied in whole shelves of romantic novels.

She returns, however, shortly, and thus addresses the agitated lover: "'I have been weeping for you both,' said she, in a tone of the sweetest pity, 'for poor L.'s heart I have long known it;'" and proceeds to administer other favourite topics of consolation of the traditional sort. Comforted, yet not cured, Mr. Sterne could only "answer her with a kind look and a heavy sigh," and then withdrew to the absent Miss Lumley's lodgings; for he had found a sort of

dismal relief in promptly hiring them on her departure. "Fanny," however (a maid of delicate mind), was in the secret of his state, and had prepared a little supper. ("She is all attention to me.") But he could only "sit over it with tears. A bitter sauce, my L——, but I could eat it with no other." The memory of "the quiet and sentimental repasts" rose up before him. The moment she "began to spread the little table" his heart "fainted within" him. "One solitary plate, one knife, one fork, one glass!" adds Mr. Sterne, in despair, taking an inventory of the table furniture. "I gave a thousand penetrating looks at the chair thou hadst so often graced, then laid down my knife and fork, and took out my handkerchief and clapped it across my face, and wept like a child. I do so this very moment, my L.; for as I take up my pen my poor pulse quickens, my pale face glows, and tears are trickling down upon the paper, as I trace the word L." Then Mr. Sterne, a little artfully, brings "Fanny" upon the scene, "who contrives every day bringing in the name of L." Oddly enough, then, he begins to relate a number of personal matters that "Fanny" had remarked in him, or mentioned to him: how "she told me last night, upon *giving me* some *hartshorn*" (how skilful this stroke!), "she had observed my illness began on the very day of your departure for S——; that I had never held up my head, *had seldom or scarce ever smiled*, had fled from all society; that she verily believed I was broken-hearted, for she had never

entered the room, or passed by the door, but *she heard me sigh heavily;* that I never eat or slept or took pleasure in anything as before." Disastrous state, and most comforting tidings for his absent mistress! Yet Mr. Sterne, who knew how to perform on that difficult instrument, woman's heart, with tolerable skill, felt that a little satisfied vanity would predominate over sympathy with his sufferings: still, if it were to bring such torments, such excessive "sensibility" was rather to be deprecated as a gift.

There is something almost comic in certain touches of those pictures of distress; still, this sort of naïve simplicity proves their genuineness and sincerity. Later on, he will be more careful in his style, and perhaps less natural.

On the next occasion that Mr. Sterne has to write, he is more temperate in style: there is evidence of improved digestion and sounder slumbers. He has committed some little transgression —omitted writing (a grave and serious offence in the Criminal Code of Love)—and he feels an uneasy presentiment that "My L. has lodged an indictment against me in the High Court of Friendship." He begs forgiveness, and yet deprecates it; for "a too easy pardon sometimes occasions a repetition of the same fault." Then, the popular air in the Beggars' Opera insensibly crossing his mind (for he was an ardent musician), he alludes to what "the miser says" when he would justify his avaricious dealings: he also tells her what "the libertine says," and

likewise what "the gamester" and "knave of every profession" is in the habit of saying, to cloak their iniquities. Finally, the "female coquette triumphs in tormenting her inamorato, for fear after marriage he should not pity her." Was this pointed at "My L.," who does indeed appear to have behaved through the business with unaccountable coquetry?

In this document are some apophthegms and moral maxims laid down with approbation, which Mr. Sterne later abandoned. First, "It is a common observation, and, *perhaps, too true*, that married people seldom extend their regards beyond their own fireside;" and secondly, "Crowded towns and busy societies may delight the unthinking and the gay, but solitude is the best nurse of wisdom." Before many years were gone, and that famous polyanthus, which was to "blow in December" in one of these very letters, "sheltered" by "a friendly wall from the biting wind," had faded away, malicious tongues were to whisper, at "Arthur's" and other fashionable places, that it was "too true" that the regards of one married person, at least, were but rarely extended *to* his own fireside, and that for the society of "the best nurse of wisdom" he had shown a positive aversion.

It was winter in Staffordshire when this note reached "My L.," and in his mind's eye he could see his "contemplative girl" in the garden watching the gradual approaches of spring. He sees Flora and Pomona walking with her, as well as all

"the feathered race" in attendance. Still, notwithstanding such companionship, he invites her to return: "Return, return!—the birds of Yorkshire will tune their pipes as melodiously as those of Staffordshire."

In the next letter "My L." is about leaving Staffordshire, and may possibly come in a Yorkshire direction. He has again trespassed in some shape, but is sure of being forgiven when he mentions the excuse. He had lost a dear and valued friend by "a sad accident;" and, "*what is worse,*" adds Mr. Sterne, oddly enough, "he has left a widow and five young children." He then fancies her natural regret at quitting her residence: "I think I see you looking twenty times a day at the house, almost counting every brick and pane of glass. *O happy modification of matter!*"—another of those amusing and unconsciously burlesqued gushes of sentiment, over which he would have himself made merry in later more sober moments. As was before remarked, these little bits are only symptoms of an earnest, eager, and sincere affection, which was only anxious to express itself as fervently as language would permit. We must sympathise a little with his Wertherian troubles: for, "Oh!" says Tristram, "there is a sweet era in the life of man when (the brain being tender, fibrillous, and more like pap than anything else), a story read of two fond lovers separated from each other by cruel parents and by still more cruel destiny;—there is a soft era in every gentle mortal's life, where

such a story gives more pabulum to the brain than all the *frusts* and *crusts* and *rusts* of antiquity, which travellers can cook up for it." And then—having forgotten these old love-letters, of nearly thirty years ago, lying tied with pink ribbon, sacred to the memory of his York days, in Mrs. Sterne's cabinet—he begins forthwith to ridicule this comic and inflated notion of conducting a *grande passion*. How merry can he be with Amandus and Amanda!—"He, taken prisoner by the Turks; she, Amanda, all the time wandering barefoot, with dishevelled hair, over rocks and mountains, inquiring for Amandus! Amandus! Amandus!—making every hill and valley echo back his name."

Still this wooing does not advance—cannot be moved forwards on any terms. In these letters the lover alludes to "distrusts" and doubts; and that departure for Staffordshire, when the temperature of their intimacy had reached so warm a character, makes us suspect a feebleness and uncertainty in the lady's disposition. And Mr. Sterne, telling the story to his daughter a few months before his death—a story which, for children, has always such a curious interest—hints at some such uncertain behaviour on her part. "She owned she liked me," he says, "and thought herself not rich enough, or me too poor . . . I believe she was partially determined to have me, but would not say so." And even "the good Miss S——," when consoling the abandoned in his first burst of despair, testifies to the same view: "her anguish is as sharp as yours, her

heart as tender, her constancy as great, her virtues as heroic" (it is Mr. Sterne who repeats this): "*Heaven brought you not together to be tormented!*" She was naturally surprised that, with such favourable dispositions on both sides, there should be any hesitation or difficulties.

BOOK THE THIRD.

THE COUNTRY PARSON.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

THE NEW VICAR OF SUTTON.

In the heart, then, of these embarrassments, while Miss Lumley is away, Mr. Sterne becomes the Reverend Laurence Sterne;—having journeyed to Chester, as we have seen, in the August of 1738, to be ordained. Nor does his political uncle (Fighting Jaques, LL.D.) leave him long without suitable provision to support his new dignity. He is ordained on the 20th, and on the 25th is inducted into the Vicarage of Sutton-on-the-Forest;—a pastoral and melodious cure, suggestive of simplicity and rural innocence, such as we might wish to see the Vicar of Wakefield promoted to. It was in the gift of the Archbishop (Blackburne), and from him the sound Whig archdeacon had obtained it for his nephew. It was scarcely a very substantial morsel of preferment, yet would do well to start a young clergyman until something more satisfactory came. His courtship stops still awhile here. He is at his new living, and has entered on a fresh road of life. Everything bids fair for success. Many things have conspired to insure certain preferment—name, relation, good interest, and politics.

Let him but live steadily, respect the artificial restraints of society, speak with reverence of the established decencies, and it was not so improbable but that in the "hailstorm of mitres" one would come tumbling on his head.

The forest from which Sutton took its musical name was known as the Galtrees, which stretched, in Mr. Sterne's day at least, all the way to York. A sort of wild wood "in some places," says a contemporary guidebook,* "thick and shady, with spreading trees; in others it is flat, wet, and boggy. It is only famous for a great horse-race, where the prize for the horse that wins is a little golden bell." More encouraging news for the new incumbent was "how great the resort of people there is to these races from all parts, and what great wagers are laid." This will vary the monotony of the lonely parsonage on the edge of the dismal forest. He is to live here nearly twenty years, yet he will never be very fond of it. For of another spot he says, "a sweet retirement in comparison with Sutton."

Here he is now to be established, yet not wholly banished; something yet remains to be done before he can be finally settled. In July, 1740, he is at Cambridge, taking his Master's degree. In the next year, the bold ecclesiastical Free Lance, "Jaques Sterne, LL.D.," again strikes for him. The Reverend Robert Hitch dies, and causes a vacancy in the twenty-six York Prebends—that of North New-

* Lysons' Magna Britannia.

bald,* one of the most substantial of the series, being worth some forty pounds a year.† There was also a house in Stonegate in the old ecclesiastical quarter, near the Archbishop's Palace, and a fluctuating increase of income from defaulting prebends who have outstayed their leave. Besides, it is a first rung upon the grand ladder of cathedral preferment, where there is an ascending row of canonries, deaneries, and still more splendid offices.

He has now an official recognised position in the city, where before he had been but a loose wandering atom, wholly unattached. It needs not to read the chronicle of Barchester, with all its careful details, to see how, in an ecclesiastical town, men and women delight to honour those beneficed mortals graced with stalls, whom the cathedral covers with her flowing skirt. The background was now to be the old low wainscoted interiors of canons' residences, where the wives and daughters of those functionaries saw company, and the spacious chambers of the ancient houses belonging to the more mundane society. An agreeable prebend, sarcastic, passionately fond of music, furnished always with a good story, and the nephew,

* In the year previous, in 1740, "he had been appointed to the Prebend of Givendale, Hamlet, or Vill, near Pocklington, with the lands in Millington." But as this approached Sydney Smith's description very nearly, its emoluments amounting to only ten pounds two and sixpence annually, it can scarcely be considered preferment. (See Willis's Cathedrals.)

† The dates of these preferments have been furnished by Mr. W. Durant Cooper, F.S.A., who possesses Sterne's letters of ordination.

too, of Mr. Archdeacon, was a welcome addition. Only seven-and-twenty years old, too. No doubt the whole city watched with infinite interest the little affair of the York *Amandus* and *Amanda!* The economy of prebend life was as true then as it was to be a hundred years later, when the wittiest of canons sketched his picture of these ecclesiastical officers. "Their preferment is coveted, and to get a stall, and *to be preceded by men with silver rods*, is the bait which the ambitious Squire is perpetually holding out to his second son."*

The emoluments of prebends less substantial than Newbald, with its apostolic stipend of forty pounds, and the precarious incidents to which the tenure might be exposed, are happily portrayed in the lucrative benefice with which Fortune favoured the Canon of St. Paul's. "I have one," he says, in these inimitable Singleton letters, the happiest mixture of wit and argument—"I have one, Neasdon near Willesdon, which consists of a quarter of an acre of land, worth a few shillings per annum, but *animated by the burden* of repairing a bridge, which sometimes costs the unfortunate prebendary fifty or sixty pounds." In later years Mr. Sterne could bring himself to speak so disrespectfully of the office as to talk of "a lousy prebendary;" and could choose as a standard of extreme dilapidation the condition of "a canon's Prayer Book." Prebendary emoluments each (individual contribution of

* Letters to Archdeacon Singleton.

which is distinguished with odd uncouth Saxon names) are still marked with curious intricacies, preserved sacred, and made up out of rental and contributions of a few pounds or shillings each.

For some twenty-six weeks of the year*—when his turn came round—must the Reverend Mr. Sterne abide in York; no very cruel necessity for him, and a fair excuse for being absent from Sutton. "What prebendary is next to come into residence is as important a topic to the cathedral town, and ten miles round it, as what the evening or morning star may be to the astronomer."† The coming into residence of young Mr. Sterne, and that procession of his up the aisle, "preceded by men with silver rods," we may be sure was looked for anxiously.

Did that odd custom, which was reported to prevail at York, of appointing to a vacant canonry the first person (with suitable qualifications) who presented himself to the Dean, then prevail, our new prebend would not have benefited by it. He was too erratic to win in such a race. But the legend is unlikely, and too racy to be true; it else would surely have been niched into the *Roman comique* of Shandy! How he lived with his cathedral *confrères* we know not, but may suspect not very happily; for one of his own body, Doctor Popham, described them to a new Archbishop as "a strange set," and almost im-

* This was the fixed letter of the rule under the old dispensation but many changes, it need scarcely be said, are constantly made.

† Sydney Smith.

possible to live with upon any fair terms. But there is other immediate preferment in store for him. Not without reason did that little history, which we have called *The Morning Post* "Memoir," set out "that he had seated himself in the lap of the Church, and if this was not covered with a fringed cushion it was not wholly naked." The fringe was rich enough for the cushion; by-and-by he hoped for a finer cushion and a more gorgeous fringe.

Another blessing was to wait on this preferment. Amanda was now returned to York, but in deplorable health. Mr. Sterne calls her illness a consumption; yet this does not seem likely, for she is to live for forty years and upwards. She has returned from Stafford, from staying with that sister, wife of the Rev. Mr. Botham, who may have all this time been working counter to Mr. Sterne's interests, looking coldly on the young clergyman's suit. But now that prebends and such honours were being heaped upon him in such abundance, and "the men with silver rods" were walking before him, obstacles may have insensibly faded away. Amanda may have appeared now sufficiently rich, and he "not too poor." With whatever view, here she is again restored to York, coming to reside for her consumption in that most unsuitable of all wintry climates.

All this while Mr. Sterne must have had a shrewd suspicion that he was tolerably secure. He believed "she was partly determined to have me, but would not say so;"—a curious tone of mind, which is yet not unknown to the *Ars amoris*. Nor was this

alliance divested of those other charms—worldly, yet necessary — which might be desirable for a young clergyman entering on life. There was "the good Staffordshire family," connected also by local ties with Yorkshire. She had a respectable annuity of some forty pounds a year, which, in the case of a clergyman's wife, was being more than "passing rich." And finally, a good "friend in the south," who had a piece of preferment in the cathedral to give away, had promised her that if she married a Yorkshire clergyman, it should be given to him.

She, however, grew worse. Mr. Sterne used to come and sit with her in those old lodgings, which, it may be presumed, he had resigned to her. Her faithful maid may have resumed her offices with "the hartshorn" and other restoratives; but it does not appear that that useful person, "the good Miss S.," ever again came upon the stage, or again sympathised in a dressing-room. The affair, however, was rapidly drawing to a crisis. One night he was with her, much distressed at the progress of her malady—"sitting by her," he says, "with an almost broken heart, to see her so ill;" when of a sudden she turned to him and said—"My dear Lawry, I can never be yours, for, I verily believe, I have not long to live. But I have left you every shilling of my fortune." And upon that she showed Mr. Sterne her will. No wonder he was overpowered by such generosity. There is nothing so genuinely sentimental in all the chapters of the

"Sentimental Journey." And it should not be forgotten—when, long after, we hear the world coupling his name with cold and unconjugal conduct—with what feeling and tender recollection he tells this story to his daughter Lydia.

After such a tableau, the drop-scene was sure not to be long in coming down: Miss Lumley's health began to mend. "It pleased God that she recovered," and in 1741 they were married. Unluckily, the proper form of the children's nursery-tales, "and they lived happily together for ever after," may not be added. So ends this Rosa Matilda love-story: Amandus and Amanda are at last wedded. The polyanthus is blooming for the present, sheltered by the friendly wall; but Mr. Sterne is only seven-and-twenty years old, and has not yet set out upon his sentimental travels.

The wedding took place with all the solemnity proper to a prebendary's nuptials. York Minster was the scene of the rite; and the Reverend Doctor Osbaldeston, Dean of York, performed the ceremony. A marriage in a cathedral is always a stately function. The anxious lovers had to wait over the Lent; and the festive season of Easter Monday, the earliest day that could be chosen, is a significant hint of their impatience. By licence, too. No doubt this is one of those "many favours and civilities" to which Mr. Sterne alludes in his dedication of a sermon to Doctor Osbaldeston. When he got home to Sutton, he walked into his vestry, took down the book of marriage-registries, and with

a triumphant flourish records the event. It may be read there now:—

"Laurence Sterne, A.M., Vicar of Sutton-on-the-Forest and Prebendary of York, was married, by the Reverend Dr. Osbaldeston, Dean of York, to Elizabeth Lumley, the 30th day of March, 1741 (being Easter Monday), in the Cathedral, by licence." *

Strange to say, he does not set out her full style and titles. He should have added, "daughter to the Reverend Mr. Lumley, late Rector of Bedal." Thus was Amanda, the clergyman's daughter, married to her clergyman, Amandus.

* For this certificate—as well as for many other matters relating to Sutton—I am indebted to the Rev. James Hare Wake, one of Sterne's successors at Sutton, who has kindly taken the trouble of searching his registers. It will be seen that this settles the question of Mrs. Sterne's Christian name.

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

THE PARSON'S LADY.

The next act of this little piece discovers the pastoral little village, which has become Mr. Sterne's new parish. A pretty spot, with a musically-sounding name, stretching along the banks of the Derwent, in an irregular street of nearly a mile long, not brought together so compactly as would be desirable for convenient parochial visitation. Elvington, too, was but a pleasant walk away; and —most acceptable charm of all — York, with its good society in mansions and "coffee-houses," within easy riding distance of eight miles. The cure of souls at Sutton might reasonably be coveted.

Now was to begin the serious business, as it was to prove in his special case, of working out the grand problem of nuptial life—the solving of those puzzling riddles "in the married state," of which, as Mr. Shandy assured his brother Toby, "there are more asses' loads than all Job's stock of asses could have carried." Here is almost as great a responsibility as that more sacred yoke so recently taken up; and both, it is to be feared, shall be found hereafter of fatal inconvenience. The nuptial

garment, as well as the ecclesiastical cassock, may have been equally unsuited to his shoulders. Nor was he conscious at this moment that he should live to cry out, how strange it was that "Nature, who makes everything so well to answer its destination, and yet, at the same time, should so eternally bungle it, as she does, in making so simple a thing as a married man!"

It is a nice office to determine with whom rests the balance of fault. Nature herself may have tripped—"whether it is in the choice of the clay, or that it is frequently spoiled in the baking, by an excess of which a husband may turn out too crusty, you know, on the one hand, or not enough so through excess of heat on the other; or that her ladyship scarcely knows what sort of a husband will do." It requires delicate scales to appreciate these defects; and yet Mr. Sterne abstains from hinting at what particular fault may lie in the baking of that finer porcelain which is usually found in the set of the marriage-service of china.

We may therefore, in all fairness, look back and try and make out, in the dim light, what manner of life was the life at Sutton, and what sort of person was the mistress of the establishment. Not the young bride newly recovered from her consumption, and barely rescued from an untimely grave, whom the Reverend Laurence had taken home with him to adorn his parsonage. Not as she appeared standing in all the glory of Mr. Gray's "purple light of love," which in the two or three earlier

nuptial years is a little dazzling. A somewhat wider view is necessary. At this season the character is new to the situation; but later on, when the gilding is more or less rubbed off, and, possibly, the scales fallen from the eyes, it will then become time to visit plain Mrs. Sterne, the vicar's wife, keeping house, doing the school-visiting and parochial needlework, in the retired "thatched house" at Sutton.

Very lately some one turns up an old and bleared etching, worked in pen-and-ink, skilfully enough—a sort of profile, with *Pigrich Fecit* in the corner, and the name "Mrs. Sterne" written under.* The expression is very plain and "unprepossessing." In such a scrap there is no manner of authenticity, and yet by some incident the thing may have drifted down to our day. And only yesterday the author of "The Scarlet Letter," turning over the treasures of a curiosity shop in the English Boston, lights upon a pair of crayon portraits of young Mr. and Mrs. Sterne, and is struck by the disagreeable character of the lady's face.† Uneasy suspicions will disturb us that the young and romantic Miss Lumley has turned into a plain and prosaic Mrs. Sterne—an excellent housewife, a good manager, but with a cold clear eye, and utter incomprehension of her lively husband's humour. The quips and shafts fly off harmless and utterly unintelligible. "Books, painting, shooting, and fiddling were my amuse-

* Notes and Queries. † Our Old Home.

ments," says Mr. Sterne. In the last of these accomplishments her aid must have been serviceable, for she had "a fine voice and a good taste in music;" and when our vicar used to perform at his own or neighbouring houses, she would "accompany him on his bass viol, much to the entertainment of himself and friends."* In that dull Yorkshire country Mr. and Mrs. Sterne and the "bass viol" would have been very welcome. Who was sitting to Mr. Sterne, unconsciously knitting while he wrote, for this graphic portrait, quite as significant of an original as those of "Doctor Slop" and "Captain Shandy"?—"She had a way, and that was never to refuse her assent and consent to any proposition my father laid before her, merely because she did not understand it, or had no idea to the principal word or term of art upon which the tenet or proposition rolled. She contented herself with doing all that her godfathers and godmothers promised for her, but no more; and so would go on, using a hard word twenty years together, *and replying to it too*, if it was a verb, in all its moods and tenses, without giving herself any trouble to inquire about it." There is a little vexation, as of personal experience, underlying this complaint; a sort of dismal protest, as of one who had suffered much in this direction. Should we play Asmodeus for a few seconds, and lift the roof off Sutton Vicarage, we shall hear a snatch of this curious duet going

* This is on the authority of a correspondent of the "Gentleman's Magazine," who would appear to have known them.

on—not this time with harpsichord and "bass viol."

"I wish," says Mr. Shandy, raising his voice, "the whole science of fortification at the devil, with all its trumpery of saps, mines, blinds, gabions, fausse-brays——!"

"They are foolish things," says Mrs. Shandy.

"Not that they are, properly speaking, Mrs. Wadman's premises," said Mr. Shandy, partly correcting himself, "because she is but tenant for life."

"That makes a great difference," says Mrs. Shandy, with placid assent.

"In a fool's head," replies Mr. Shandy.

Looking on them through many years, during the nineteen or so of Mr. Sterne's provincial banishment, we are, by the aid of scraps from letters and hints in "Tristram," helped to a rough average portrait of this parson's lady. She is like to have settled down into a plain, well-meaning, orderly, humdrum sort of housewife,—excellent for school-work, for cottage-visiting, for marketing, for sweeping up, and weekly washings,—excellent as a social labourer of life, yet, unhappily, with a literal turn of mind, and on which her husband's brilliant rockets might explode harmlessly, quite unfelt and unappreciated—a rigid and fatal ignoring of any non-natural sense, or witty metaphor: all good worka-day qualities, but, as a long experience has shown very ill-suited to the *ménage* of your brilliant eccentric. She either damps his powder utterly, and he has to go abroad to light up his catherine-wheels;

or he boldly projects them on the domestic hearth, and furnishes himself with infinite amusement from her insensibility.

Long after, when she and her daughter were to set out from York to join him at Paris (a very serious journey), his letters of instruction,—showered thickly on her, filled with minutest directions, such as one would impress on a child,—point to the same view. So many things are to be got, all enumerated in language purposely childish and simple. Then, at the end, all are again summed up in a short epitome, as though he had called her back to impress all on her once more. Comic, too, is his caution,—"Mind you keep these things distinct in your head;" which tone shows a lack of confidence in the powers of Mrs. Sterne's intellect. Later still, at a French watering-place, she excites the amusement of an acute Frenchman by her persevering adherence to her husband, pursuing him everywhere with a painful jealousy—a proceeding (even allowing for a Frenchman's peculiar view of the conjugal relations) somewhat injudicious.

With the walls of that Tristram Gallery tolerably well decorated with notorious characters, figures from the neighbourhood fearlessly made free with, and hung up for posterity to laugh at, it is not likely that he would refrain from picking up any crooked sticks lying by his own hearth. If such suited his bundle he would not have much delicacy about the matter; nay, his own special humour would be amazingly tickled by this fireside study, and relish

hugely her pleasant unconsciousness that any little peculiarity of hers was being described. There are touches in Mrs. Shandy eminently lifelike, and that seem copied from the maturer Mrs. Sterne. That lady, as we have seen, had to be carefully fortified for her journey, with the minutest directions. But Mrs. Shandy, with a dull indifference to the world, chose to remain behind, when all her family departed on a similar expedition; "being taken up with the project of knitting my father a pair of large worsted breeches (the thing is common sense), and *she not caring to be put out of her way*, staid at home at Shandy Hall during the expedition." We may be sure she had the "thin, blue, chill, pellucid crystal, with all its humours, at rest," which distinguished the eyes of Mrs. Shandy, and that "a temperate current of blood ran orderly through her veins in all months of the year." It is to be lamented that these temperate currents should not always mix harmoniously with the impetuous and zigzag stream which tumbles noisily from the hills.

It is not likely that Mr. and Mrs. Sterne ever debated seriously that immortal "breeches" question; yet it seems impossible not to believe that some such exquisitely ludicrous discussions repeatedly took place. With his comic theories and odd expressions, fetched up mainly out of that quaint black-letter mine he was so fond of, there was sure to follow on the other side a constant misapprehension, or else a settled and tranquil indifference arising from an utter hopelessness of comprehension; from which dulness

was to result, in one of Mr. Sterne's quick and mercurial temper, all manner of impatient protests, more, however, in the shape of a comic displeasure than grim anger. "As to matrimony," said he, long after, "my wife is easy, and I should be a beast to rail at it." And this easiness extended not so much to a mere tolerance of his faults as to a general placid acceptance of anything that was proposed to her. The Recording Angel, therefore, should be tender with that impatient burst of Mr. Shandy, by whose mouth Mr. Sterne made his own comic protest. "Cursed luck," said he, biting his lip, "for a man to be master of one of the finest chains of reasoning in nature, and have a wife at the same time with such a head-piece that he cannot hang up a single inference withinside of it to save his soul from destruction!"

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

SUTTON VICARAGE AND PARSON YORICK.

And now that the Rev. Laurence is fairly afloat with his parochial duties, provided, too, with a Mrs. Sterne to play vicar's lady, let us look into this Yorkshire parish of Sutton, and see how he will adapt himself to a newer and more pastoral shape of life. He must be content here with the monotonous round of country duties, which will be found dreary after York festivals, trying his ministry upon rude agricultural hearts, almost as rough and unbroken as their own Yorkshire clods of earth. This sort of spiritual farming will scarcely suit one of his tastes and habits. Long after, when laying his book at the feet of the Great Minister, he tells him that the quarter of England whence it comes is "a by-corner of the kingdom," and that the house in which it was written was "a retired thatched house." Three or four years after, the "retired thatched house" was not standing.

The incumbent of Sutton-in-the-Forest, when he brought home his bride, found his parsonage sadly out of repair. The "retired thatched house" in the "by-corner of the kingdom" had been bequeathed

to him in no very habitable condition, and some little outlay must be incurred before the newly-married pair could settle themselves comfortably. The chimneys were decayed, the flooring wanted renewing, and the thatch and plastering needed restoration generally. When the business was done, and the bill paid, the Rev. Laurence went into his vestry, opened his registry, and made the following truly Shandean entry:—

"A. Dom. 1741.

	£	s.	d.
"Laid out in sushing* the house, . .	12	0	0
"In stuccoing and bricking the hall, . .	4	6	0
"In building the chair-house, . . .	5	0	0
"In building the par^{r}. chimney, . . .	3	0	0

"Spent in shaping the rooms, plastering, underdrawing, and jobbing, *God knows how much!*"

In short, a total of about five-and-thirty pounds, putting a reasonable sum to stand behind that characteristic "God knows how much!"—which particulars are to be *in perpetuam rei memoriam*, to testify that he has been an improving tenant, possibly with a view to indemnity from his successor. But he will amply indemnify himself later for his charges; when it shall come to pass that the whole edifice shall be burnt to the ground, and he shall dexterously shift the burthen of rebuilding it to other shoulders.

We can well fancy the odd figure bent over the old registry, turning over the yellow leaves in

* In a short Yorkshire glossary, made by an antiquarian clergyman on a pedestrian tour, and given in "Nicholls' Anecdotes," I was fortunate enough to find that this curious word "sushing" is put for draining.

search of something droll, from its very old fashion. No one relished this groping among book-catacombs so much as he. Presently he gets back to the year 1678—to the age when old Vicar Walker was in office, and falls with delight on a devout and solemn entry: a wonderful hail-storm, with hailstones of a portentous size. This was chronicled by old Vicar Walker—not Sterne's immediate predecessor Vicar John, but an older Vicar William Walker. There is such a quaint and childish simplicity in the entry, that we, too, will look over Mr. Sterne's shoulder and read:—

"Upon ye 21st of April, in ye year of our Lord, 1698, did fall soe much Snow that it made very nigh a ffoot in depth at sunsetting. Doubtless it must have been much deeper had not ye season of ye year caused the melting of much of it as it came. It came without wind; on ye night following, soe sharp a ffrost succeeded, that I took up Ice out of ye stone trough in ye churchyard, nigh an inch thick. The weather for a ffortnight after was very severe and unhospitable. The third day of May, was a Tempestous day of wind, snow, and rain, and the night very ffrosty. About the back end of May or beginning of June, soe gt a shower of Hail fell, that some of it lay unmelted for 24 hours after. These being soe unusual occurrences, I thought fit to attest ym under my hand.—Will. Walker, *Vicar.*"

This delicious simplicity must have been exquisitely relished by a child of Shandy. Something in

the way of parody was irresistible. So by-and-by the Rev. Laurence comes back to his great book, and writes seriously, among the births and christenings: "Hail fell in the midst of summer as large as a pigeon's egg, which unusual occurrence I thought fit to attest under my hand.—L. STERNE."

This bit of private waggery, which was not likely to be seen until a season when he could not hope to be by to relish its effect, is a true key to his nature; for it shows us that careless and most indiscreet spirit of humour, which was perfectly genuine, and would break out in all seasons irrespective of propriety. Such persons are sure to commit moral suicide with their characters; and it is unlikely that Mr. Sterne's humour confined itself to such harmless sport as making comic entries in his parish ledger.

It is now, then, time to ask what manner of man this was, whom the Yorkshire farmers, lifting their heads from their work, saw riding by—whom the few families near were glad to see at their houses, and whose company the squire of his own district did *not* affect (they were never on good terms), and whom the whole congregation listened to preaching on the Sunday.

Parson Yorick, as is well known, stands for Parson Sterne; and in the history of the Shandy clergyman are chronicled what grievous issues his curious spirit, further developed, led to. It is conceded that many of Mr. Yorick's adventures are drawn

from life; and in all the colouring and smaller details, an irresistible conviction presses on us, that Mr. Sterne's parish experience must have been travelling through his mind. This breaks out in a thousand natural little touches, scraps of furniture as it were, not important enough to be supplied by the invention, but exactly what would come without effort from the memory.

Well might this stout muscular flock be surprised at the lean, lanky, and palefaced figure, who seemed utterly without "stamina" in the chest. In that curious face there were not cheeks, but sides, to the face, a long Voltairean mouth, which went away at an angle, and a singular nose. If the jaws were lanthorn there was a steady Rabelais light inside to illuminate it; and if that nose was shaped as the Ace of Clubs, the mouth as clearly took the figure of the lower half of the Ace of Hearts. He tells us all about this nose, not in the legend, but in a little personal paragraph; and any one who looks at the wonderful Lansdowne portrait, or even at the mere common engravings which face the title-page of cheap editions on the stalls, will admit the truth of this comic simile.

Sometimes he was to be seen riding, and "had made himself the country-talk by a breach of all decorum; and that was in never appearing better or otherwise mounted than upon a lean sorry jackass of a horse, value about one pound fifteen shillings, who, to shorten all description of him, was full-

brother to Rosinante." Clearly another parish association, which ushers in that droll sketch of the universal request in which was this clerical nag: how at last, being wearied out with midnight expresses from parishioners whose ladies were in very critical straits, for the use of his horse to fetch medical aid, and having lost many good steeds from these charitable loans, he was in self-defence driven to the device of keeping some wretched worn-out hack, not worth the borrowing.

On such a "Fiddleback," who was always either "twitter-boned or broken-winded, or spavined, or greazed" (Mr. Sterne knew something of horses and the ills of horseflesh, and was to ride a good deal hereafter along the French post-roads), he was to be seen jogging along the Yorkshire lanes, never passing a village but he "caught the attention of both old and young." We can well believe it, that as he came trotting up, just waking out of a reverie, either "composing a sermon," or "composing his cough," "labour stood still, the bucket hung suspended in the middle of the well, the spinning-wheel forgot its round, even chuck-farthing and shuffle-cap themselves stood gaping until he had got out of sight."

It is wonderful how one of his delicate frame and figure could have so long stood the rough blasts and trying climate of Yorkshire. He had miserable health, and may be said to have been always fighting off consumption. Something was radically

wrong with his chest. At Cambridge he had "broken a vessel in his lungs," and Yorick is subject to "an asthma" (which he "caught by skating against the wind") and "a vile cough," which is destined to be his old man of the sea. Perhaps, after all, these rude but stimulating breezes, and the healthful air of Sutton and Stillington, were of service, and gave strength to that weak and ill-put-together frame.

With the "squire of the parish"—Squire Harland—he was not on good terms; nor is one of his pattern of mind, delighting in sly and concealed humour, likely to be ever acceptable to the rude boisterous "Westerns" of a country district. Far more suitable is an abundance "of a mysterious carriage of body to cover the defects of the mind" —Tristram's translation of the French *mot* for gravity—the best clerical garment that can be put on. Among a few select friends, that "life, and whim, and *gaieté de cœur*" must have made the Parson of Sutton a delightful companion; but with the many-headed of the district—the dull, the starched, the unnoticed, the ill-natured—these were dangerous qualities. "For with all this" he "carried not one ounce of ballast; he was utterly unpractised in the world; and at the age of twenty-six, knew just about as well how to steer his course in it, as a romping unsuspicious girl of thirteen." No wonder, then, that the "gale of his spirits ran him foul ten times in the day of somebody's tackling;" and as "the grave and more slow-paced were often-

est in his way," it may be well conceived how much the mischief was complicated.

This age of twenty-six, the "first setting out" of the luckless Yorick, was also about the age when Mr. Sterne was first setting out on *his* parish duties, which shows how curiously and minutely exact was this parallel intended to be. And though there is some varnish of romance spread over all, in that pathetic end of the slandered Yorick, and his peculiar and fatal sensitiveness to the remarks made about him, still it is easy to separate the romance from his own proper experiences, and correct the one portrait by the other. The Reverend Laurence was not likely to let a few idle tongues disturb his quiet: the iron was not to enter into his soul on such a poor pretence as that. "At first setting out," indeed, that cold welcome and harsh requital of these "ungracious pranks" might have thrown him back upon himself; but a twenty-years' rough experience must have rubbed down that delicate surface. By the time he was drawing Parson Yorick, he would have grown to care little how busy the Sneers and Candours and Sir Benjamins of the district might be in perverting his most innocent actions, and, tolerably hardened, could, under a sort of parable, enter a resigned and quiet protest against the cruel misconstruction that was to dog him through life. It is quite certain that "Parson Yorick" stands for Parson Sterne. Even before Tristram was published, he was known as "Yorick." But in that narrative there is a wounded

—even excited—tone, which speaks of personal experience; and any one familiar with the course of his life has only to read that chapter carefully to find the key to his character, and the unlucky misconstructions to which his behaviour led, and which he was too proud to set right. It throws light upon the whole of those twenty years of his parish life. This portrait helps us as distinctly to his history as though it were a memoir.

He had brought all his gay spirits and careless speeches with him into the parish, desirous to please everybody; or, at least, lighten the monotony of dull country-life by jest and lively humour. But he had not reckoned on those "good, plain household understandings," to be found everywhere, and who, when they cannot understand a jest, accept it as an offence. Neither had he taken into account the curious combination which makes "knaves and fools combine" to punish the man superior to themselves in wit, for wounding one of their company with a smart thing or a careless jest. He had, besides, "an invincible repugnance to gravity"—not to gravity as such, but to sham gravity—used as a cloak for ignorance and folly, the professors of which have an equal repugnance to the man of wit.

Nor was his talk guided by a prudence which would induce him, for his own interest, to respect those who could be useful to him. He was altogether "unhackneyed and unpractised in the world," and made no wise distinctions. He spoke out

loudly his opinion on any action that was reported to him, an impression he would "usually translate into plain English without any periphrasis;" so that when mention was made of a pitiful proceeding, "he never gave himself *a moment's time to reflect who was the hero of the piece—what his station*—or how he had power to hurt him hereafter; but if it *was a dirty* action, without more ado, the man was a dirty fellow—and so on." The worst was, this verdict had usually the misfortune of being shaped into a *bon mot*, or "enlivened with some drollery or humorous expression," and "*it gave wings to Yorick's indiscretion.*" These were not lost for want of gathering.

This going on "at compound interest," it may be imagined what an accumulation of ill-favour there was to his credit at the end of his twenty-years' parochial work! He had wantonly involved himself in "a multitude of small book-debts" of this stamp; and not meaning any harm, had never thought of them once after they had left his mouth. But, as Stevenson often explained to him, with every person angered by a jest reported to him, there are friends and kindred to make common cause: besides "the many recruits which will list under him from a sense of common danger;" so that "for every ten jokes" there was a reckoning of at least "a hundred enemies." Even, added Eugenius, if they are "honest and sportive," fools cannot distinguish this, and knaves will not. Again, as is always the case with such natures, he was too

proud to vindicate himself where he felt that he had meant no wrong; for his "was that singularity of temper which would never suffer him to set a story straight with the world, however in his power." Perhaps he had attempted it at first, and it had been ill received, and thus was driven into a species of habitual defiance of public opinion, and even open hostility. This we may confidently accept as a picture of Mr. Sterne's position in his parish; and it exactly squares with all that is known of his character from other sources. The whole account is bitter and sorrowful to a degree, and as an analysis of some features in social life, is worthy of La Rochefoucault.

No wonder that "a grand confederacy was formed, headed by * * * and * * *"—unquestionably hints at real characters, who, when the book was being devoured in Yorkshire, must have been pointed out directly. But if he had enemies he had also friends; and it will be seen how the Crofts and other families of good repute held fast by him.

And yet it was hard to try him by a very exalted standard. The Yorkshire "household understandings" had no ecclesiastical models to look to conspicuous for any special gifts. The country clergy of Mr. Sterne's time had not yet struggled out of that dead level of rural parsonship, of which Macaulay has left so graphic and unpleasant a picture. The chaplain was still the retainer more than the companion of the master, and presumptuously raised his eyes to my lady's maid. My lord, by a sort of

feudal prerogative, would sometimes force on him even a less dignified alliance. The Yorkshire curates had a notoriety through the kingdom for being more miserably underpaid than their brethren.* In the country districts were to be found hunting and swearing and drinking parsons, but into these categories Mr. Sterne was not to fall. He was to be conspicuous among the Yorkshire clergy for intellectual gifts and more elegant tastes.

Of such a clerical brother did a Yorkshire gentleman once draw the following picture from life :—

"Jock, groom, sailor—first of jokers,
Legislator among smokers ;
Like Moses, wrapt in clouds of smoke,
He laid down laws to hearts of oak.
A sportsman keen by land and water,
Yet never took delight in slaughter.
* * * * *
Not more renowned for song and pipe,
Than for a powerful fist and gripe ;
He set the spoiler in the stocks,
And felled the poacher like an ox."†

The same cheerful spirit, who all his life played Damon to Mr. Sterne's Pythias, in another place gives a glimpse of the social position of the "gentlemen of the gown" in Yorkshire. Thus he sings :—

"You've seen a parson at a table,
Whose business was to read the news,
And *draw a cork*, if he was able ;

* See a burlesque address from the "emaciated" Yorkshire curates, that went the round of the newspapers in the year 1769.

† Hall Stevenson's Poems.

And do remember, I daresay,
The foolish figure that he makes
When the cork will not come away,
For all the pains the parson takes."

That wicked *jeu-d'esprit* which Mr. Grose niched into his entertaining "Olio," seems to hint at a prototype among these Yorkshire clergy. But Tristram gives a glimpse of the ecclesiastical status worth a whole dissertation: for when Trim went on his charitable embassy to the sick Le Fever, lying at the inn, he opened the kitchen-door, and found that "*Mr. Yorick's curate was smoking a pipe by the kitchen fire.*"

But a graver consideration, and of some influence on the habits of the local clergy, was the reputed character of the Metropolitan of York—the Primate of England, one who was nearly fourteen years Mr. Sterne's ecclesiastical superior.

This was Archbishop Blackburne, concerning whose past life, morals, and manners the strangest rumours were circulated. Some of these have no more basis than the authority of Walpole, who was notoriously prejudiced against the bishops of his day; and others, it is only just to say—such as, for instance, his being father to Bishop Hayter—are proved to be untrue. But there is left a residuum of ugly facts, which have never been authoritatively contradicted, and which, coming from a different quarter, could scarcely have been uttered in reference to a personage so exalted without some foundation. That he should have been the friend and

companion of Sir Robert Walpole—a man of loose private and political morality—is in itself suspicious. It was said that, even after ordination, he had roved the Spanish main as a buccaneer, and had long practised the piracies of that lawless profession. Stories came home of this profane notoriety, even among his fellows; how he had fought duels on the mainland, and boldly waived any protection his gown might afford him. But even graver charges were afloat: and it was said that the Palace at Bishopsthorpe was disgraced by the residence of ladies whose quality was, at least, dubious. Whatever truth there was in these rumours, it was a gross scandal that a man lying under such suspicion should have the direction of a see; and it was not surprising if, under such supervision, the discipline of the Yorkshire diocese was somewhat lax.* So that if Mr. Sterne gave himself up too little to his duties and more to profane offices, there is some excuse in the absence of a wholesome corrective power. One of the Yorkshire archdeacons—who bore the same name, and who was sometimes supposed to have been his son—was also the subject of sinister rumours. This was the Archdeacon of Cleveland—Jaques Sterne's archdeaconry also—who had written a strange book called "The Confessional," and was said to be an avowed infidel. Friends, indeed, came forward after his death, and averred that they had heard him make a declaration

* See the "Gentleman's Magazine," "Notes and Queries," and Walpole passim, who calls him "the jolly old Archbishop."

—"I believe in the divinity of Christ;" but there is no doubt an atmosphere of suspicion hung about him all his life.

"Books, painting, fiddling, and shooting" were the *confessed* amusements of the Vicar of Sutton; and some pious works, a good deal of preaching, a good deal of love-making, of a harmless and "clergymanical" order, were his unacknowledged pleasures. First, for the fiddling.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

MR. STERNE PLAYS UPON THE BASS VIOL.

"Ptr—r—r—ing—twing-twang—prut-prut. 'Tis a cursed bad fiddle! Do you know whether my fiddle's in tune or no? Trut—prut. *They should be fifths.* 'Tis wickedly strung—tr—a-e-i-o-u—twang——. The bridge is a mile too high, and the 'sound-post' absolutely down, else—trut—prut——. Hark! 'tis not so bad a tone. Diddle, diddle, diddle, diddle, dum—— twaddle-diddle, tweedle-diddle, twiddle-diddle, twoddle-diddle, twuddle-diddle—prut—trut—krish—krash—krush. We have undone you, sir, but you see he is no worse."

Were the windows open of a summer's evening at Sutton, some such fanfare as this would be heard, the Vicar being busy tuning his bass. The scientific reader will endorse Mr. Sterne's practical knowledge of his instrument, when he hears that "*they should be fifths,*"—one of the mysteries of tuning.* Inside, no doubt, there were musical neighbours enough, sitting round to listen—the bearer, "with the bundle

* Rabelais, however, tuned a fiddlestring in this mimetic fashion long before Mr. Sterne's day.

under his arm," the "grave man in black," and the "gentleman with the sword." These might have been good connoisseurs, for "there is nothing in playing before good judges." But sometimes there came Yorkshire listeners, of dull inappreciative tempers, before whom Mr. Sterne, with his fund of "sensibility," found it insupportable to play. True musicians will quite comprehend his indignant protest,—"Sir, I had rather play a caprichio to Calliope herself than draw my bow across my fiddle before that very man; and yet I'll stake my Cremona to a Jew's trump (which is the greatest musical odds that ever were laid), that I will, this moment, stop three hundred and fifty leagues out of tune upon my fiddle, *without punishing one single nerve that belongs to him!*" Hence it may be concluded how acute were his sufferings when compelled to hearken to a performance even a bare "league" or so out of tune. Abrupt change from one position to another could not be tolerated even by Mr. Shandy; for "attitudes are nothing, madam: 'tis the transposition from one attitude to another, like *the preparation and resolution of the discord into harmony,* which is all in all."

That his love for music was enthusiastic and genuine, and the performances on the "Bass Viol" incessant, may be gathered from any dozen pages of "Tristram." There is here no affectation of connoisseurship or *dilettante* patronage of the science, but an eager relish and earnest appreciation. It is his favourite illustration. Crotchets and the technical

argot become almost troublesome by their constant intrusion; and if his fingering of his favourite instrument corresponded at all to his theoretical knowledge, he must have been a very agreeable performer. Thus it is that Mr. Shandy speaks "in the sweetest modulation," and took down his hat with "gentlest movement of limbs that ever affliction harmonised and attuned together." So when Phutatorius broke out into his various exclamatives, compounded of "amazement" and "bodily pain," a skilful observer could distinguish the two tones "as plainly as a third or a fifth, or any other chord in music," and at the same time be puzzled; for "the concord was good in itself, but, then, 'twas quite out of the key," which, in the performance of Harpsichord and "Bass Viol," would produce fatal complication. And in that "humming over" of Doctor Homenas' notes for the sermon—where "the modulation's very well," and where there "up-started an air in the middle of it so fine, so rich, so heavenly"—there seems to come a reminiscence of an old German symphony or Handelian overture, which, after "spiritless and jejune" bits, do often break into such sublime passages. Even when bearding his "daytall" critics must he help himself out with the old-fashioned musical notation, and talk of "braying in G—sol—re—ut, from morning even unto night." Sitting with his Bass Viol between his knees, we can see those spirited words of command upon his music, with which the absent composer gives the

signal for musical battle. "Just Heaven! how does the *poco più* and the *poco meno* of the Italian artists—the slight touches of the chisel, the pencil, the *fiddlestick*, give the true swell, the true pleasure!" which shows that Mr. Sterne had penetrated to the true secret of refined musical enjoyment. One such glimpse do we actually obtain, and for a moment see the music on his desk, "which must have been played off *like* the *Sixth* of 'Aviso Scarlatti'—*con furia*—like mad." "Grant me patience!" he continues (aiming a sly stroke at certain musical affectations), "what has *con furia*, *con strepito*, or any other hurly-burly word whatever, to do with harmony?" Often did the parlour at Sutton echo to the dismal groans of the "Bass Viol" as it was screwed to the fitting pitch before attacking "Aviso Scarlatti's" Sixth.

Among the last of those little tender offices with which the Bramin made himself so busy for Eliza, then embarking on board the "Earl of Chatham" Indiaman, was the getting her piano, "tuned by Zumpe," up to the C string of her guitar—such an instrument to be presented long after to his daughter Lydia, when she became an "accomplished little slut"—and which he was very careful should have the proper strings. "It must be strung with catgut," he writes, "and five chords." Then, airing his Italian a little, he adds, "*Si chiama in Italiano la chitera di cinque corde*," and "some musica body" must be got to buy it for her.

Even in his sermon on the Houses of Mourning

and of Feasting, he cannot forbear a sly allusion to his favourite instrument; and among the temptations of society, ready to ensnare the good man, reckons harmony:—"When music likewise has lent her aid and tried her power upon his passions; when the voice of *singing men* and *singing women*, with *the sound of the viol*," are joining in the seduction. The Croft family, and other houses to whom the Bass Viol would be brought that evening, must have exchanged a meaning glance. Another Sunday, contrasting truth and falsehood:—"Imposture is all dissonance; let what master soever of it undertake the part—let him harmonise and modulate it as he may, one tone will contradict another. And while we have ears to hear we shall distinguish it. It is truth only which is consistent and ever in harmony with itself; it sits upon our lips like the natural notes of some melodies, ready to drop out whether we will or no."

Even when he was travelling sentimentally (*ex-officio* as it were), and was chatting so pleasantly with the Count de Bissie, he must give that nobleman his opinion of French manners in a lively musical metaphor. "I believe, Mons. le Comte," said I, "that man has a certain compass as well as an instrument, and that the social and other calls have occasion by turns for every key in it; so that, if you begin a note too high or too low, there must be a want either in the upper or the under part to fill up the system of harmony." This figure, however ingenious, did not convey much to "Mons. le

Comte," to whom the sentiment had to be repeated, in plainer language. It was on this journey, too, that he witnessed that charmingly pastoral scene in the Bourbonnois—"the grace," the supper, the village dance, and the "old man" and his wife, who completes the picture by furnishing the orchestra. For this old man "had some fifty years ago been *no mean performer* upon the *Vielle*, and at the age he was then of, *touched it* well enough for the purpose." His wife, too, "sung now and then a little *to the tune*." This Vielle was a sort of hurdy-gurdy. In the sweetness of which colouring, as in all these scenes in the South of France, there is an indescribable charm which is the best testimony to the genuineness of Mr. Sterne's "sentiment;" and his constant introduction of a musical element, wherever it can suitably be introduced, shows how true and constant was his enthusiasm.

When Mr. Sterne got to the old posting-town of Montreuil, and was about engaging his pearl of valets, questioning him as to his gifts, he finds out that he combines the two unusual accomplishments of "making splatter-dashes," and playing "a little on the fiddle." "*Why*, I *play a bass myself!*" breaks out Mr. Sterne, with enthusiasm, welcoming so congenial a companion. And at the very first stage of Tristram's travels, he tells us how he happens "to be both *fiddler and painter*, according as the fly stings."

STERNE'S DRAWING. *Page* 185.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

MR. STERNE AT HIS EASEL.

Painting was another of the tastes of this accomplished Yorkshire Parson—gifts upon which his brethren must have looked with ill-disguised contempt: setting him down a fiddling and scraping fellow—a sketching and scribbling parson—one that did not follow the field, and take his bottle like a man. His was a genuine and artistic love, as is plain to those initiated, without any cant of connoisseurship, or mere affectation of knowledge. That was a true artist's criticism upon the figures in Raphael's famous work at the Vatican:—"So finely painted, which your connoisseurship knows is so exquisitely imagined, that even the particular manner of the reasoning of Socrates is expressed by it." That fresco he could never have seen—Mr. Sterne not having yet set out upon his travels—but the engravings were familiar enough to every virtuoso. Even from his Sutton pulpit are sent forth allusions to this pursuit. When making the panegyric of humility, he says, a little affectedly:—"It is in life what the *clear obscure* is in painting: it makes the hero to step forth in the canvas, and detaches

his figure from the group, in which he would otherwise stand confounded for ever. And Elijah restoring her child to the widow of Zarephath would be a subject one might recommend to the pencil of our greatest genius."

Another time, speaking of Job and the cruel judgments formed of him by his neighbours, he calls it "a bad picture, and done by a terrible master; and yet we are always copying it." And again, dwelling on scandal, he brings in the terms of the art in this amusing fashion:—"Give but the outlines of a story—let *spleen* or *prudery* snatch the pencil; and they will finish it with so many hard strokes, and with so dirty a colouring, that *candour* and *courtesy* will sit in torture as they look at it." This affected personification of *candour* and *courtesy* as two connoisseurs, suffering acutely by looking at a bad picture, is highly entertaining. When Mr. Shandy blushed over his remark to Captain Shandy, he must have reddened, pictorially and scientifically speaking, *six whole tints and a half, if not a full octavo above his natural colour*. In his comic dedication to an imaginary peer, he impresses on him that "it is far from being a gross piece of daubing," as some are. "The design your lordship sees is good; the colouring transparent; the drawing not amiss: or, to speak more like a man of science and measure, my piece, in the painter's scale, divided into twenty, I believe, my lord, the outlines will turn out as twelve; the composition as nine; the colouring as six; the expression as thir-

teen-and-a-half, &c."* Besides, adds Mr. Sterne, "the dark strokes in the hobbyhorse give great force to the principal lights in your own figure, and make it come off wonderfully."

At this time, too, was fashionable an instrument known as the pentagraph—an unworthy mechanical device, akin to what was called Poonah-painting, which came in some half-a-century later, for guiding young ladies along a sort of poor royal road to art. And when signifying how unfair and odious is a certain way of drawing men's characters, he can only liken it to a fashion "borrowed from the honourable devices which the Pentagraphic Brethren of the Brush have shown in taking copies." Nay, he seems almost, by a sort of prophetic foreboding, to have divined the smirking catalepsy of a *carte-de-visite;* for there were some historical sketchers in his time "who would make a drawing of you in the camera, which is most unfair of all, because *there you are sure to be represented in some of your most ridiculous attitudes.*" He knew well the odious slang of connoisseurship, and skilfully sketches the scene of the professional *dilettante* reporting on the "Grand Picture" then exhibiting: "A melancholy daub, my lord, not one principle of the pyramid in any one

* Mr. Sterne must have found this little bit of affectation in a volume of "Ana," in his friend Hall Stevenson's library. See "Nouvelle Bibliot. des Ana," tom. 2, p. 154. The following is a specimen:

La balance des Peintres.	Compos.	Dessein.	Color.	Express.
Rembrandt . . .	15	6	17	12
Raphael	17	18	12	18

group, and what a price! For there is nothing of the colouring of Titian, the expression of Rubens, the grace of Raphael, the purity of Domenichino, the correggiosity of Correggio, the bearing of Poussin, the airs of Guido, the taste of the Carrachi, or the grand contour of Angelo"—descriptions, if the names are a little astray in the spelling, very happy and judicious. This clan Doctor Goldsmith heard also—plaguing the deaf Sir Joshua with their "Correggios and stuff;" with what result the famous rhyme tells us.

There is evidence, however, that this skill was not merely theoretical. Long after, when his fame was established, and the brilliant Mr. Sterne was turning up in every capital—the centre of a circle of brilliant men—he had fallen in with a Mr. Woodhul, a gentleman of elegant tastes, and a noted collector of rare books. His large library, stored with whole battalions of school-divinity as well as with light-companies of the gayest French writers, suffered the inevitable fate of all remarkable collections, which only seem to be got together for the purpose of being scattered again. This gentleman published a volume of coldly classical odes, addressed to various ladies, and filled with more than usually obscure heathen allusions.

When Mr. Sterne was in Rome he drew some fanciful sketches for his friend's poems. Mr. Woodhul read him his odes "To the Muses," addressing them as—

"Celestial maids! my venturous song inspire!"

and bringing in a mixture of Pirene, Helicon, Parnassus, the Mincio, and "Albion's chalky cliffs." There are but three sketches in all: one characteristically adorning the ode to "Miss Sarah Fowler"—a lyrical burst, in which allusion is made to "Salopia's happy plains;" and another as curious composition, in a kindred spirit, with a temple on the top of a hill,—an oddly-shaped Pegasus in the foreground. But the third is a really pretty sketch of a Roman landscape, suggested by Tivoli, with a graceful personification of a fountain,—the figure of a reclining Dryad leaning on an urn. The hand that composed this pretty little scene, it is plain, could have skill for greater efforts. They were well etched by a Roman artist—Faldoni; and in the corner is to be seen, in tiny characters, "L. Stern," (without the *e*) "del. Romæ." * In short, with the exception of the handling of trees in the first plate (which are a little "fuzzy," and tending to the shape of those that have traditionally grown in Noah's-arks), there is very little of the fatal amateur feebleness to be discovered—sure always to betray itself. This lyrical effort of the late "Michael Woodhul, Esquire," is dwelt on here on account of this artistic copartnership with the author of "Tristram"—a community of labour of which, it may be presumed, *he* thought poorly; dreaming that the portion for which Michael Woodhul, Esquire, was accoun-

* The book was not published until 1772; unless, indeed, the illustrations appeared with the odes to "Miss Sarah Fowler," which came out separately several years before.

table would float securely down "the gutter of Time," at the very least, while Mr. Sterne's decorations might glide timidly behind.

He knew, too, the little elegances of a virtuoso; and put Mrs. Shandy, when listening at the door, in so classical an attitude, that "the Listening Slave, with the Goddess of Silence at his back, could not have given a finer thought for an intaglio."

CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

MR. STERNE IN THE FIELDS.

As to that "shooting" which, with "books, painting, and fiddling," made up the sum of Mr. Sterne's amusements at Sutton, he does not seem to have taken to it cordially. Nowhere does he break out as a sporting parson. This taste does not leaven "Tristram" through-and-through, as do his other tastes; nor is it, like others of his sympathies, affectionately and even artfully laid in ambush, at many niches and corners of his writings, to surprise the unwary reader. Once, and once only, does any skill in the art of fowling betray itself, when he alludes to that "happy backwardness and *renitency against conviction which is observed in old dogs*, of not earning new tricks:" for even when tramping over the fields, gun in hand, with Juno or Sam in front, he could be busy in his studies of the human character and its analogies. That phrase "renitency against conviction" shows, too, that some numbers of *The Rambler* came down by coach to Sutton; for it sounds quite in a Johnsonian key.

The Vicar of Sutton is not so wholly taken up with that "painting, fiddling, and shooting" (how is

it that he does not put his pastoral offices into the inventory?) but that he can find room for a sufficient spell of the agriculturals. He can have an eye to the breaking-in of the rough fields, as fits a Yorkshire parson; and, we may well suspect, is not to be taken-in, or preyed on, by reason of foolishness or inexperience in the world's ways. All through his course we trace a sharp worldly manner, and a brisk attitude for business and money-affairs. It needs only to read his letters to see that Shandyism and sentimentals did not distract him from the more serious business of a genuine husbandman.

He knew well what would be the most suitable treatment for that famous Oxmoor—that "fine, large, whinny, undrained, unimproved common," which had cost the family eight hundred pounds—and had skill enough to "set about calculating the simple expense of paring and burning and fencing, with the certain profit it would bring him. . . . . For it was plain he should reap a hundred lasts of rape, at twenty pounds a last, the very first year, besides an excellent crop of wheat the year following; and the year after that (to speak within bounds) a hundred, but in all likelihood a hundred and fifty, if not two hundred, quarters of pease and beans, besides potatoes without end;"—a complete scientific rotation of crops, with the whole train of a farmer's hopes and dreams. Heartily he must have despised the drudgery which purchased such knowledge. There must have been some little patch of ground near the real Shandy Hall, answer-

ing to this Oxmoor, lying between a windmill and a watermill; and it is likely that he was tempted to experiment on it in the order of treatment proposed by Mr. Shandy. Long after, in one of his letters, he cautions a certain "Sir W." against hopeless agricultural explorations. "You are much to blame," he writes to the Baronet, "if you dig for marl, unless you are sure of it." (He speaks with an air of science and authority.) "I was once such a puppy myself, as to pare and burn" (Mr. Shandy's actual programme,) "and had my labour for my pains, and two hundred pounds out of pocket." Disgusted with his attempts, he breaks out with—"Curse on farming! I will try if the pen will not succeed better than the spade. A cartload of turnips," he adds, with a comic ill-humour, "was very dear at two hundred pounds!"—a lament which, if more loudly spread abroad, would be swelled in a unanimous chorus by legions of amateur farmers. With the economy of the kitchen-garden he was also familiar, and could illustrate the system of lines by that straight line, which "is the best line, say cabbage-planters:" neither did he neglect his orchard, on which, in these pastoral days of his, he could bestow some pains and outlay.

And turning over the leaves of an old Sutton Church Registry, we find, in that Shandean receptacle for horticultural entries, this record of his labours set out:—

"Mdm.—That the Cherry Trees and Espalier Apple Hedge were planted in ye gardens, October

ye 9th, 1742. Nectarines and Peaches planted the same day. The pails set up two months before.

"I laid out in ye Garden, in ye year 1742, the sum of £8 15*s.* 6*d.*

"L. Sterne."

How did it fare with the peaches and nectarines in that rough Yorkshire district? Even here is a little glimpse of character: no sinking into the humdrum slough of obscure parish existence; no chronicle of the mere small-beer of a country curacy—a lowly satisfaction in his cabbages and potato-drills—but a bold aiming at those choicer fruits he was accustomed to see in the graperies at Harewood, or on the rococo china services of Skelton Castle. "If the pails" be the green tubs we see drawn up in files in France, he must have been yet more ambitious. That £9 was a fair outlay for a poor country parson; but next year he extends his labours.

The leaf of the Sutton Register for 1743 shows another horticultural entry:—

"Laid out in enclosing the Orchard and in Apple Trees, in ye year 1743, £5. The Apple Trees, Pear and Plumb Trees, planted in ye Orchard ye 25th day of October, 1743, by

"L. Sterne."

Still he was not to be exempt from the anxieties that disturb gardeners' heads. In the great '45 year—when the vigorous Jaques is busy with political work, correcting unhappy accoucheurs, and making a sort of solitude which he was to call tran-

quillity—the little domain at Sutton is visited by a catastrophe which works much mischief to the labours of the reverend gardener. Another inappropriate entry in the Register tells the story:—

"In May, 1745, a dismal storm of Hail fell upon this town and some other adjacent ones, which did considerable damage both to the windows and corn. Many of the stones measured *six inches* in circumference. It broke almost all the south and west windows both of this house and my vicarage-house at Stillington.

"L. STERNE."

That difficulty in laying down cabbages seems to have made a great impression on him, that setting them out in regular lines appearing to him the grand problem; so that when he apologizes to readers of "Tristram" for digressions, in a new and more crooked digression this difficulty in cabbage-planting occurs to him at once. "I defy," he says, "the best cabbage-planter that ever existed, whether he plant backwards or forwards, it makes little difference in the account—I defy him to go on coolly, critically, and canonically planting his cabbages one by one, in straight lines and stoical distances!" It is plain that Mr. Sterne was gifted with practical working habits of business — a shrewd, pointed spirit of management, which in the whirl of spirits, and even of extravagance, was not likely to neglect mere worldly interests.

Mr. Sterne's letters, and earnest directions in these letters, all show a prompt energetic shape of action

anything but Shandean. Parson Sterne must have been as vigorous a country gentleman as Squire Western himself. See how he can do a stroke of business for a brother of the cloth. The clerical brother has hay to dispose of.* Hearken to Yorick!—

"I have taken proper measures to get chapmen for it, by ordering it to be cried at my two parishes; but I find a greater backwardness among my two flocks in this respect than I had imagined." This was owing "to a greater prospect of hay and other fodder than there was any expectation of about five weeks ago. It is with the uttermost difficulty, and a whole morning's waste of my boys, that I have got sufficient men to bid up to what you had offered—namely twelve pounds." How can Mr. Sterne justify this little stretch of agricultural morality?—"I have put them off," he says "under pretence of wanting more myself, but in truth to wait a day or two to try the market and see what can be got for it." This sharp stroke does someway recall the less creditable stratagem in reference to "Vhen" and her friends, which he was hereafter to boast of. "I have nothing for you," he says in conclusion, "but two things to choose—either to set men to mow it for you, or let the men who bid the most for it take it."

Thus has the Reverend Laurence exhibited all his

* See *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 68, pt. II., p. 587. This letter is unaccountably not included in the published collection. There are many spurious letters—witness those in the Shandean Magazine so feebly and clumsily done as to ensure detection at a glance. But this "Hay" letter bears the Sterne "cachet" unmistakably.

...—painter, fiddler, fowler, and bon-vivant. Did he ever fill in a heavy hour at Sutton with poetry or, at least, with rhyme-making? Perhaps we may only see scraps of Mr. Simms's remains here come down to us, one in the shape of a sort of metrical epitaph, the quality of which is such as to amply justify that in not having further cultivated this vein. Poor Dan Tobacco is a novelty, and deserves a place here:—

> "Gemma and Edward were but rarely seen,
> In the sense of deserved use;
> The sweet companion and the friend sincere
> Need no exclusive help to prove the year.
> In heartfelt numbers were meant to shine,"
> [illegible]
> Or kindred tempers have a tear to lend."*

But a more characteristic specimen of his powers as a poet has been tastefully handed down to Cornwall, from which he seems to have emanated. These verses are in the grand manner of the older humorous poetry, and in mind may remind the reader of the "Soul's Errand."†

THE UNKNOWN G.

Verses occasioned by hearing a Pass-Bell.

By y^e Revd. Mr. Sm—x.

> Harke! my guy For^t y^e solemn Toll
> [illegible]
> To guess, y^t all to know not where
> To live, y^e widdy^d and th'Orr—

* Lines to a Miss Simms.

† The late Mr. Bone, the eminent enamellist of Cornwall has also honoured me with a copy of these lines.

In that mysterious ⊙ none knows,
But ☉ alone to w^m it goes;
To whom departed souls return
To take their doom to smile or mourn.
Oh! by w^t glimmering light we view
The unknown ⊙ we're hast'ning to!
God has lock'd up y^e mystic Page,
And curtained darkness round y^e stage!
Wise ☧ to render search perplext
Has drawn 'twixt y^s ⊙ & y^e next
A dark impenetrable screen
All behind w^ch is yet unseen!
We talk of ☧, we talk of Hell,
But w^t yy mean no tongue can tell!
Heaven is the realm where angels are
And Hell the chaos of despair.
But what y^ese awful truths imply,
None of us know before we die!
Wheth^er we will or no, we must
Take the succeeding ⊙ on trust.
This hour perhaps o^r Fr^d is well
Death-struck y^e next he cries, Farewell
I die! and yet for ought we see,
Ceases at once to breath and be—
Thus launch'd f^m life's ambiguous shore
Ingulph'd in Death appears no more,
Then undirected to repair,
To distant ⊙^s we know not where.
Swift flies the ☽, perhaps 'tis gone
A thousand leagues beyond the sun;
Or 2^ce 10 thousand more ☧^ce told
Ere the forsaken clay is cold!
And yet who knows if Fr^nds we lov'd
Tho' dead may be so far removed;
Only y^e vail of flesh between,
Perhaps yy watch us though unseen.
Whilst we, y^ir loss lamenting, say,
They're out of hearing far away;
Guardians to us perhaps they're near
Concealed in vehicles of air—
And yet no notices yy give
Nor tell us where, nor how yy live;

Tho' conscious whilst with us below,
How much y^{ms} desired to know—
As if bound up by solemn Fate
To keep the secret of y^{ir} state,
To tell y^{ir} joys or pains to none,
That man might live by Faith alone.
Well, let my sovereign, if he please,
Lock up his marvellous decrees ;
Why sh^{d} I wish him to reveal,
W^{t} he thinks proper to conceal ?
It is enough y^{t} I believe
Heaven's bright^{r} y^{n} I can conceive ;
And he y^{t} makes it all his care
To serve God here shall see him there !
But oh ! w^{t} ☉^{s} shall I survey
The moment y^{t} I leave y^{s} clay ?
How sudden y^{e} surprize, how new !
Let it, my God, be happy too—

There is a charming simplicity and quaintness in these lines which makes us wish their author had written more. There is, too, an earnestness, and a genuine pathos, which no ordained Tartuffe, or whining sentimentalist, could have given utterance to.

We find also a stanza or so of Diego's sentimental ballad, in the story of Slawkenbergius ; the whole of which incident seems an anticipation of Canning's satire on German love-making in "The Rovers."

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.

MR. STERNE IN THE PULPIT.

From time immemorial, *saltimbanques*, clumsily disguised in gown and bands, have scrambled up over the rails of the pulpit, laid down their carpets, and performed a selection from their *répertoire*. And their programme is treated with indulgence; for there are people who find the saving-of-their-souls sermons, tedious, and are not disinclined to have the process lightened by pleasant jests and antics. The trick, however, is stale enough. A pleasant Jesuit—and there have been more pleasant and humorous Jesuits than the world is aware of—wrote a witty and entertaining novel to satirise the familiarities which had then grown into a fashion with the Spanish preachers. Most travellers, and most readers of travels, know what curious illustrations and freedom of style foreign preachers are given to; which must be set to the account of Continental habits and vivacity, and is in a very different spirit from the profane irreverence just alluded to. The adventures of the famous Friar Gerund de Campazes are well known to all readers of the *Gil Blas* style of humour, and are full of

burlesque examples of what should be avoided in preaching.

It no doubt surprised his congregation when the preacher commenced gravely, "I deny that there is in God unity of essence;" and while they were gasping at this scandalous doctrine, it was reassuring to have quietly added, "Thus saith the Arian; thus saith the Manichæan." That other preacher, too, was ingenious, and certainly original, who burst out with, "Fire! fire! fire! the house is on fire! Water, sirs, water! for the world is burning! (*Quis dabit capiti meo aquam?*) Now, sexton, toll the bells. (*In cymbalis bene sonantibus.*) For to toll for the dead and to toll for fire is the same." These are what may be styled conceits.

It is curious that in the very year this odd book came out there should have been an obscure Yorkshire parson entertaining his Sunday congregations with sermons conceived very much after this grotesque pattern. This was a tall, lank, and straggling figure, ill fitted together, and singularly odd in appearance,—a strangely-formed face, twinkling eyes, a sly mouth, and a nose "shaped like the ace of spades." This was Parson Sterne,—Parson Shandy, presently to write a sort of English Pantagruel romance, which was to convulse the town. But he was now obscure, and was entertaining himself and his parishioners with weekly bursts of Shandeism in the pulpits of his little churches of Sutton and Stillington.

Shall we enter one or other of these sacred

edifices on some Sunday when the vicar himself is about to preach, and hearken to one of these odd discourses; while the Yorkshire congregations, who have come, according to their degree, in the family-coach, or in the clumsy "white chapel," or upon the back of the heavy Yorkshire "Punch," are disposed, in smart Sunday uniform, down the aisles? Here, in his own pew, is the surly lord of the parish, Squire Harland, with whom the vicar was not upon terms, but who went for the glory of his family-sitting, and to growl at dinner over the queer tricks of his enemy; while conspicuous in the Stillington congregation were the faces of the Croft family, the firmest of Mr. Sterne's many firm friends, and to whose enduring affection he testified after a nearly thirty years' trial. Both Harlands and Crofts, descendants of his enemy and of his friend, still sit in the pews at Sutton and Stillington.

Here is now the long strange figure of the celebrant, making for his pulpit, with that odd spasmodic gait, his gown fluttering behind, and the curious Voltairean smile on his face. Those must have been strange and bewildering discourses for the congregations: in parts utterly unintelligible to the Yorkshire yeomen; in parts as entertaining as *Tristram*. How acceptable now would be even a tradition of the manner and gesture with which he coloured his speech; the fashion with which he suited the Shandean action to the Shandean word! Yet, from the abrupt transitions in print, the dashes, the turns, the breakings-off, we may be almost sure

that his voice and delivery reflected all the starts and spasms of his manner. Did he keep "his body swayed and bent forwards, just so far as to make an angle of eighty-three degrees and a half upon the plane of the horizon, which sound orators know to be the true persuasive angle of incidence?" and which was the attitude into which Trim fell instinctively when about to preach *his* famous sermon On Conscience? The Vicar of Sutton was not likely to be trammelled by such artificial rules, and had not much esteem for the orthodox angle; for "in any other angle you may talk and preach, 'tis certain, and it is done every day," and most frequently on those Sundays and festivals at Stillington and Sutton, where the lean body bent over the pulpit-edge, and the long arms swung in utter defiance of conventional rules.

No wonder that Mr. Gray, who had not heard him preach, but had read his sermons when they first came out, wrote to his friend that "you often see him tottering on the verge of laughter, and ready to throw his periwig in the face of the audience." And, with the comic twists and dramatic turns, audience is perhaps a fitter word than congregation. We may conceive the Reverend Laurence one Sunday gravely giving out his text from Ecclesiastes vii. 2, 3: "*It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting;*" and then, while the congregation is settling itself to hear this wholesome counsel fortified, the Voltairean lips assume a curious smile, his eyes twinkle, and he starts at once with "THAT I

DENY!" What looks among the Yorkshire squires and their daughters! Then he goes on, "But let us hear the wise man's reasoning upon it. '*Sorrow* is better than laughter' *for a cracked-brain order of Carthusian monks, I grant;* but not for men of the world." He goes on to ask, "Do you think, *my good Preacher,*" &c. Which pleasant familiarity must have sadly scandalised the serious portion of the congregation. More surprised must they have been on other Sundays, when he began solemnly from Romans, "'Despiseth thou the riches of His goodness, knowing that the goodness of God leadeth to repentance?' So says St. Paul. And Ecclesiastes viii. 11: 'Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.' *Take either as you like it, you will get nothing by the bargain.*"

Or on another Sunday, when he began quoting from Samuel, "'Shall not Shimei be put to death for this?' *It has not a good aspect.* This is the second time Abishai has promised Shimei's destruction; once when . . . Shimei cursed David: '*Let me go over, and cut off his head.*' *This had something at least of gallantry in it.*"

Or on another occasion, when he selected the singular theme of "the Levite and his concubine" for the Sunday's entertainment, treating it with an easy and courageous familiarity that must have confounded his rustic hearers. "For he arose and went after her," said Mr. Sterne, "having his servants with

him, and a couple of asses. And when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him. *A most sentimental group, you'll say. And so it is, my good commentator.* The world talks of everything."

From this Sutton pulpit came such foretaste of Shandy, that it must have been real entertainment to have been listening. Such odd conceits and illustrations—nor did it matter from what well, mundane or sacred, he drew them, so that they came to hand easily. "A haughty and an abject temper are much nearer akin than they will acknowledge," he said one Sunday; "*like poor relations, they look a little shy at one another* at first sight; but trace back their pedigree, they are but collateral branches of the same stem."

More curious still to hear the poetry of Shakespeare rolling from the pulpit, and that famous denunciation of the unmusical man, adapted ingeniously to the case of one without compassion. The familiar "pride that licks the dust" of Pope is then, perhaps, for the first time, introduced to the rustic ears, with allusion to heathen history, "the beautiful instance in an anecdote of Alexander the Tyrant of Pheres;" with reference also to Seneca and Epictetus, and a little story of one of the Roman emperors. Presently he treats the agricultural ears to a conceit which sounds very much in the rich key of old Fuller, in reference to that gift of sarcastic observation which is no more than "setting up trade upon the broken stock of other people's failings, the furthest extent of which is to

be praised, *as we do some sauces, with tears in our eyes.*" Our bodies too, have need of pleasure, by way of relaxation; and, "like clocks, must be wound up at certain intervals. . . . . Many are apt to turn giddy upon every little *exaltation*, always a curious spectacle; for, in sober truth, it is but a scurvy kind of trick when Fortune, in one of her merry moods, takes a poor devil with this passion in his head, and mounts him at once as high as she can get him. For it is sure to make him play such fantastic tricks as to become the very fool of the comedy." He is fond too of illustrating his discourse with allusions drawn from the stage. Courage is "like a Spanish soldier upon an Italian stage—a bladder full of wind. 'Why should we need the promptings of vanity?' asks the comedian, who is taught a part he feels not." The good and evil in men's characters are often so mixed, it is hard to form a fair opinion: "The way the world usually judges is to sum up the good and bad against each other, deduct the lesser of these articles from the greater, and (as we do in passing other accounts) give credit to the man for what remains upon the balance." It often happens, too, that many reputations are "sent out of the world by distant hints,—*nodded away, and cruelly winked into suspicion.*"

In the confounding category of printed sermons of this date,—for every holy man printed his sermon "at the request" of the congregation, or some other body,—there was a class of divinity very vain and

repelling, being mostly tesselated with quotations, and an empty parade of erudition. Such exhibitions, though he had his armoury stored with such articles and ready to his hand, and could have used them with more skill and profit than another, Mr. Sterne disdained to imitate. Here was the golden text which hung before his eyes when he sat at his desk writing :—

"To preach to show the extent of our reading or the subtleties of our wit,—to parade it in the eyes of the vulgar, with the beggarly accounts of a little learning,—is a dishonest use of the poor single half-hour in the week which is put into our hands. 'Tis not preaching the Gospel, but ourselves. For my own part, I had rather direct five words point-blank to the heart." And to the creed it must be said that Yorick was always faithful.

Two of these sermons are of so eminently "Cervantick a cast," that they might have been preached by young Tristram, supposing Mr. Shandy to have sent him into the Church. One was on Shimei, a character in Samuel; the other upon "the Levite and his concubine,"—a subject which would seem to require a little very delicate treatment: the first full of extravagance and Shandeism perfectly genuine, and which will well repay a few moments' consideration. For, among other merits, these Parish Sermons of Mr. Sterne are marvellously short,—a wholesome precedent for long-winded divines. Some, indeed, will barely take up ten minutes slowly reading; unless those dashes and

starts and turns stand for so much dramatic business, and represent pauses and play of feature.

The fashion in which the career of Shimei is traced,—the odd comments and dramatic colouring with which it is set out,—is a perfect Shandean picture, which would be extravagant but for its perfect sincerity. This Shimei, as is well known, reflects all the fortunes of David, according to the true temper of the world. As he is prosperous, he is forward; as he is unlucky, he reviles him. "The wheel turns round once more. David returns in peace; and, had the wheel turned round a hundred times, Shimei, I dare say, in every period of its rotation, would have been uppermost." At which sycophancy Mr. Sterne breaks out sarcastically: "O Shimei! would to Heaven, when thou wert slain, that all thy family had been slain with thee, and not one of thy resemblance left! *But ye have multiplied exceedingly, and replenished the earth; and, if I prophesy rightly, ye will in the end subdue it.*" These modern Shimeis are the most fatal evils of society. "'Tis a character we shall never want. Oh, it infests the court, the camp, *the cabinet; it infests the Church.* Go where you will, in every profession *you see a Shimei*, following the wheels of the fortunate through *thick mire and clay.*"

This stroke does indeed seem pointed at a diaconal Shimei only eight miles away, and called "Jacques Sterne, LL.D."

"Haste, Shimei!" Mr. Sterne goes on, warming; "haste, or thou wilt be undone for ever! . . Shimei

doubles his speed. . . Stay, Shimei; 'tis your patron! 'Tis all one to Shimei. Shimei is the barometer of every man's fortune; marks the rise and fall of it, with all the variations, from scorching hot to freezing cold, in his countenance, *that the simile will admit of.*" (This stroke is Tristram all over.) "Hast thou been spoken for to the king, or the captain of the host"—*i.e.* commander-in-chief —"without success? Look not *into the Court Calendar; the vacancy is filled up in Shimei's face.*"

The Levite stood in need of companionship "to fill up that uncomfortable blank in the heart in such a situation; for notwithstanding all we meet with in books, in many of which, no doubt, there are a good many handsome things said upon the sweets of retirement, &c. . . . . yet still it is not good for man to be alone; nor can all which the cold-hearted pedant stuns our ears with on the subject ever give one answer of satisfaction to the mind." With the same cordial adhesion would another statement of his be received, that "if Mercy and Truth thus met together in settling this account, *Love* surely would be of the party. Great, great is its power in cementing what has been broken!" a sentiment which the reverend preacher was hereafter to expand considerably, both in precept and in practice. Cruel is the fashion society has of visiting indiscretions. "Must Beauty for ever be trampled on in the dirt for one—one false step? And shall no one virtue or good

quality out of the thousand the fair penitent may have left—shall not one of them be sufficient to stand by her? Just God of Heaven and Earth!"

A charming and a gallant cleric indeed, our new vicar, and puts things so very prettily—this must have been the verdict of those who listened to this questionable burst. And yet there were harsh and sour people, who bought and read the book, when the book was published, and spitefully and cruelly said that the preacher, "would ascend the pulpit in a harlequin's jacket."

With many serious blemishes, and leavened with much affectation, they are still earnest, dramatic, practical, and simple sermons, with prodigious life and dramatic power, and which, when set off by voice and manner, must have been entertaining and instructive. Beside them, the tame conventionalities of Blair read feebly indeed. And there is in them a triumphant answer to those charges of plagiarism which have been so often swung from hoarse and jangling critical bells. There are few divines who do not keep their shelves stored with files of choice sermons, from which they can gather a flower here and there, and tie up for their Sunday's sacred bouquet. For these helpings from the fragrant botanic gardens there is no acknowledgment sought or given; they are free to the clerical public. How much our hebdomadal discourses are improved by this pious larceny may be well conceived; so that perhaps it were most profitable of

all to revert to that Sunday practice of Sir Roger—Mr. Spectator's Sir Roger—who had Doctor Tillotson, and Doctor Barrow, and Doctor Jeremy Taylor to preach for him in turn; a treat he secured by making his chaplain read a discourse of one of these divines every week.

Mr. Sterne,—introducing his sermons in a most modest preface, considering that he was then in all the flush and triumph of the first months of *Tristram's* success,—thus deprecates harsh judgments: "I have nothing to add," he says, "but that the reader upon old and beaten subjects must not look for many new thoughts; 'tis well he has new language. *In three or four passages, where he has neither one nor the other, I have quoted the author I have made free with.* There are some other passages where I suspect I may have taken the same liberty," &c. And so he quotes the Christian Hero, and Woolaston, and Tillotson, and others, which, with his own apology, is a sufficient answer to the laborious detection of "the ingenious Doctor Ferriar, of Manchester," and others of the literary police.

When Mrs. Sterne, left a widow, and her flighty, sprightly Lydia were rummaging poor Yorick's desk and drawers for what he called the "sweepings of his study," to strive and turn up the smallest scraps of his that would fetch them a little money, was the bundle of sermons they lighted on done up in the eccentric manner that poor Le Fever's funeral sermon was, namely, "tied lengthways and cross-

ways with a yarn-thrum, and then rolled up and twisted round with a half-sheet of dirty blue paper?" Or were those two musically labelled "Moderato," as well as the half-dozen marked "So. so," put together in one bundle by themselves, and confined by the "piece of green whipcord, which seemed to have been the unravelling of Yorick's whip-lash?"

That was a rare Shandean notion, of scribbling a sort of musical judgment, usually upon the inside of it, which was turned towards the text, and summing up the merits of one day by "A l'octava alta," of another by "Sotto voce," "Con l'aria" upon this, "Senza l'aria" upon that, and, above all, "Con strepito" upon the back of another. This was one of Yorick's tricks, the incumbent of Tristram's parish; but we might be sure, could we turn up the rough drafts of those parish sermons of the genuine Yorick of Sutton, to find the same eccentric criticism. For Mr. Sterne tells us in the same paragraph that Yorick "was a musical man." The sermons on "the Levite," and on "Hezekiah," and on "the house of mourning," and, above all, that bit of Rabelais on "Shimei," should surely be labelled "Con strepito." For they show ten times more knowledge of the human heart, "seventy times more wit and spirit, discover a thousand times more genius, and, to crown all, *are infinitely more entertaining*," than the "So. so's." An odd description of a sacred work.

But what was the notable sermon, in the corner of which had been timidly "wrote, with a crow's quill, in a small Italian hand," the word, "BRAVO!" but which was afterwards modestly crossed out? Was it not eminently Shandean to jot down such a postscript as this? "N.B. The excellency of this text is, that it will suit any sermon; and of this sermon, that it will suit any text." Of another: "This is but a flimsy kind of a composition. What was in my head when I wrote it?"

Of another, anticipating the flock of critical ferrets soon to be laid on his track: "For this sermon I shall be hanged; for I have stolen the greater part of it. Doctor Paidagunes found me out. 'Set a thief to catch a thief.' The fitness of the criticism for the criticised is perfect. Sermon and preacher were of the same Cervantick cast." For, as he said elsewhere, "'tis for all the world like humming a song; be but in tune with yourself, madam, 'tis no matter how high or how low you take it."

Delightful, it may again be repeated, must it have been to have heard one of these Shandy sermons, in delivery (as well as in composition) Shandean. Figure, gait, and feature all combined to make a strange exhibition. It seems certain that the delivery *must* have taken the shape of the composition; for otherwise they would have been feeble and powerless performances. We may, then, indorse the testimony of Gray, who held them to be "in the style most proper for the pulpit, and show a strong imagination and a sensible heart."

These sermons, too, forty-six in number, are powerful testimonies in favour of Mr. Sterne's character as a minister of his Church; a character in dealing with which all the common rules of compensation and gracious allowance would seem to have been suspended. No man has ever received such harsh measure. He has been flung among the stag-hounds, and cruelly rended by their fangs, just as the *curée* takes place at Fontainebleau after an imperial day's sport in the forest. For one of his constitution, preaching was almost fatal. That "breaking of vessels" in the lungs, which had taken place at Cambridge, and which took place so soon afterwards, might at any time have happened in the pulpit; and yet he persisted, until within three or four years of his death, in this pastoral duty. "Preaching, which I have not strength for," he writes in '62, "is ever fatal to me; but I cannot avoid the latter yet." And yet he persisted. It would seem to have been a distasteful office to him, which makes his success and diligence in this walk the more remarkable.*

* In Mr. Gladstone's curious review of the low religious tone of that day, a well-deserved tribute is paid to Sterne's Sermons.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH.

LITTLE LYDIA THE FIRST.

When Mr. Sterne is thus busy with his four sufficient amusements of "books, painting, fiddling, and shooting," he has occasion, in the year 1742, to go into his vestry, and make a more gratifying entry than usual in his parish register. The family at Sutton Vicarage is happily increased; and the First of October became a joyful day for his house by the birth of a little Lydia the First.

We who read the chronicle of Yorick's lonely parish, and sympathise with his troubles, and the forced loans of the lean jade that was ridden to death scouring the Yorkshire roads by night, to fetch medical aid to ladies in sore and pressing distress, can well picture the comic embarrassments of our divine under all the incidents of this happy visitation. There is a vitality and heartiness in all the incidents of the little drama of Tristram's birth, "outspeaking," as it were, of a real and inconvenient experience. No medical aid was at hand "within seven long miles' riding, which seven long miles, in dark nights and dismal roads (the country thereabouts being nothing but

a deep clay), was almost equal to fourteen;" and at the end of that seven miles lay York. Doctor Burton Slop's reputation extended beyond a yet wider radius; and in the list of professional cases which illustrate his great work, is set out that of "Mary English, of the parish of Sutton-in-the-Forest." This at once brings him in connection with Mr. Sterne. Even in York the practitioners, on whom sufferers were to depend at so critical a moment, are represented as being sadly deficient; and Doctor Burton has industriously collected some awful cases of mismanagement at the hands of "one who calls himself a surgeon and man-midwife of this city."

In this destitution of useful aid, which must have been attended with serious results, it is quite in keeping with Mr. Sterne's humour, and the humour of Mrs. Sterne, to have constituted themselves a sort of rustic Physicians' College, and issued faculties to that "widow in great distress, with three or four small children, in her forty-seventh year—a person of decent carriage and grave deportment;" in short, to secure the services of this useful auxiliary by clothing her with a quasi-official character.* In short, "the Parson and his lady" got her a little instructed in some of the plain principles of the business in order to set her up in it: they paid the fees "for the ordinary's licence, amounting in the whole to the sum of eighteen shillings and four-

* A curious picture of the medical destitution in the rural districts of England.

pence." And we may be sure there was a comic friend of Mr. Sterne's—Hall Stevenson, or the Reverend Panty Lascelles—to furnish this "person of decent carriage" with a sort of burlesque diploma, investing "the good woman with the real and corporal possession of the office," according to "a neat formula of his own devising," which travestied pleasantly the solemn slang of a legal grant, but which can scarcely with propriety be introduced in this place. Quite in keeping, too, is the notion of the "Cervantick friend" going about and coaxing "many of the old licensed matrons in the neighbourhood to *open their faculties afresh*, in order to have this whimwham of his inserted."

The reputation of this "decent person" spread very fast, and she enjoyed the steady patronage of the ladies of the district. She was, moreover, "very well looked on at one *large Grange House*, and some other odd houses and farms within two or three miles from the smoke of her own chimney"—that "Grange House" being notably pointed to the residence of the Crofts. The whole arrangement has a natural parochial air, and bears a stamp of reality quite irresistible.

It was natural that Doctor Burton of York, the eminent "scientific operator, within so near a call as eight miles of us," should regard with unfriendly feelings this class of "decent women," who intruded upon his obstetrical domains. Accordingly, that "five-shilling book" is filled with fierce denunciations of the ignorant practitioners, strengthened

with terrible warnings and fearful cases. Mr. Sterne had once the book in his hand, which he said exposed "the blunders of the sisterhood;"—a fearful volume, illustrated with diagrams, which scare us a little, yet scarcely so much as the anatomical horrors of the medical literature of the present day.

No wonder, then, that Mrs. Sterne was determined not to avail herself of the services of this operator, to whom was attached such unpleasant associations. He, too, had "scattered a word or two in his book in favour of the very thing which ran in my father's fancy;" which was no other than that terrible operation, only resorted to at the last extremity, which was supposed to have helped Julius Cæsar into the world. Doctor Burton had dropped a hint, that this method might not be attended with such fatal results after all; and it is likely that a man of Mr. Sterne's humour, who delighted in odd learning about all kinds of odd notions, would have hunted up all the queer fancies written upon this strange hobby, and, perhaps, amused himself by playing gravely on Mrs. Sterne's fears and timidity. "He mentioned the thing one afternoon to my mother, *merely as a matter of fact;* but seeing her turn as pale as ashes at the very mention of it, as much as the operation flattered his hopes, he thought it as well to say no more of it."

Though we may not lift the veil that hangs over this delicate little drama, we can see Mr. Sterne entering his vestry, and making that triumphant entry with a certain exultation:—

"BAPTIZED IN 1745.

"Oct. ye 1st.—Born and baptized Lydia, the daughter of the Reverend Mr. Sterne, and of Elizabeth his wife, daughter of the Rev. Mr. Lumley, late Rector of Bedel."*

Still these honours of paternity were to be very shortlived; for on the day following he again walks towards his vestry, but this time with slow and mournful steps. And, turning to the mortuary page of the Register, we read what he wrote—

"BURIALS, 1745.

"Oct. 2.—Lydia, daughter of Mr. Sterne, Vicar of Sutton."

In the meagreness of which entry there is really significance and tokens of sincere agitation. There is no spreading out of words with their fullest state, as in the first—no exultant flourish. It is simply "Oct. 2," instead of "Oct. ye 1st;" there is no ecclesiastical glory of "Reverend," or even "Rev.;" but he is plain Mr. Sterne, the grieving father. The article even is left out. This may seem refining, and yet there is a significance in such trifles. So passed away little Lydia the First!

He was, however, happily provided for the costly responsibilities of paternity. When Amanda, triumphing over opposition, delays, and the perils of ill-health, was at last finally united to her lover,

* I do not know whether it will not be considered a sort of delicate clue to a personal character, or a little tribute to the complacency of the moment, that "the late Rector of Bedel's" ecclesiastical title is abbreviated, while Mr. Sterne's is set out in its full glory and extent.

there was a good fairy ready to help them on in a purely earthly manner, in the shape of a "friend of hers in the South." This amiable person made her this singular promise, that "if she married a clergyman in Yorkshire, when the living" (of Stillington) "became vacant he would make her a compliment of it." Those who are interested by the lovers' story will not be deceived by this poor generality. This good fairy was heart and soul in their little history, confided to him by "My L——;" and the future gift was pointed specially at Amandus, the Reverend Laurence.

But who was the good fairy; and why would not the father be glad to tell his daughter the name of so opportune a benefactor? "A friend of hers" sounds vague and misty. It was in the gift of Lord Fairfax, of that famous Fairfax family with which Mr. Sterne was already connected by ties of marriage. This nobleman had estates in Kent, which would fit him for the character of the "friend of hers in the South." Yet it does seem curious that Mr. Sterne, who was never slack in pushing his own fortune, should not have taken this office on himself, and treated directly with his noble connexion.

In due course the vacancy came, and the good fairy presented Amanda's husband. In April, 1743, the Rev. Richard Musgrave and the Rev. Richard Levett had died, which caused a vacancy in the prebendal stall of Stillington. . . . Attached to the stall was an incumbency, only a short distance from

Sutton, and which was worth forty-seven pounds a-year. There was besides a profit rent of a house in York, amounting to the moderate sum of one pound six and eightpence. On the 13th of March the formal mandate for his induction was issued. He had thus become a sort of small pluralist, holding three prebends and three rectories.* Nothing could be sweeter or more convenient for a little miniature pluralism. But two miles or so away from Sutton, by a little stretch of speech, it might be almost considered the same parish. It is so happily situated that he can perform services at both places of a Sunday without the least inconvenience; and Stillington Church, where he used to preach his sermons—those sermons which he dug out of some old dusty drawer, when the drums and trumpets were beating noisily in honour of Tristram—was justly admired as an elegant specimen of Gothic. Old Sutton Church still shows the dark oak pews (old-fashioned, closely grained as marble, and black as ebony) where Mr. Sterne's parishioners sat and hearkened to him. Its roof is supported by files of oak pillars, instead of stone or marble, against which the ancients of Mr. Sterne's congregation leaned their heads and dozed tranquilly.

* On the 3rd of March a dispensation had been granted to him to hold these various livings together.

CHAPTER THE NINTH.

"CRAZY CASTLE."

About the year 1763, a young Scotch clergyman and his military friend were riding post through England, on a sort of holiday excursion; and coming to Harrogate, put up at "The Granby," then, as it is now, a house of great repute. This was the handsome and brilliant "Jupiter" Carlyle, and his friend was an officer named Clerk.

They were taking an evening stroll, when they met a chaise driving towards their inn, with two gentlemen inside, whom the soldier, who was of a forward and vivacious temper, fancied he recognised; and hurrying after them, he presently brought back word that these were "hands of the first water." This might have been exaggerated praise; but they turned out to be Mr. John Hall (better known as John Hall Stevenson, Mr. Sterne's old Cambridge friend) and Colonel Charles Lee, the famous American general, with whom the public was more familiarly acquainted as "Savage Lee."

At Harrogate, about this time, was to be found

the "best entertainment of any watering-place in Britain, at the least expense;"—a great charm in the eyes of the Scotch gentlemen, who were swarming over England, and converging to their countryman, Lord Bute, then first-favourite of a constitutional sultan. For just at this time the storm against the Scotch was raging: boots were being carried about the streets at the end of poles; a lady of the court had said wittily to the Princess Dowager, "*Madame, chacun à son but*"; and the surly Johnson had felled a Mr. Ogilvie with a savage retort, that "the finest prospect a Scotchman ever sees is the high-road leading to England."

The new friends met in the evening at "The Granby," that ripe old house, still blooming like "The George" of York. The first people in the kingdom were here; and at one table alone the united rental of the guests reached to £60,000. According to the curious etiquette of the day, the ladies found the gentlemen in tea and sugar. Dinner was but a shilling, supper but sixpence, rooms were gratis, and the best claret was supplied at one shilling a bottle. No wonder that "The Granby" was "much frequented by the Scotch!"

Mr. Hall made a great impression. He struck the Scotch clergyman truly as "a highly accomplished and well-bred gentleman," a description that fitted him perfectly. By-and-by the touchy Scotch officer and "Savage" Lee got into argument over their one-shilling claret, and began to wrangle noisily; but Mr. Hall's "mild and cour-

teous manner" and adroit knowledge of the world skilfully averted a quarrel. Another night, when all the world was at the ball, or busy with "guinea-whist," and the Hero of Plassey (an "ill-looking man, with two sides to his face much unlike") was being much looked at, Mr. Hall and his friends stayed behind at "The Granby," and sat up till six in the morning, discussing Lord Bute.

This was the facetious lord of "Crazy Castle," a Shandean title for Skelton Castle, near Guisboro', the resort of a guild of true Cervantick Brethren —a most quaint and rococo mansion, charmingly situated near the Upleatham Hills, sheltered by thick and picturesque woods, with a glimpse of the mouth of the Tees. About it hung a cloud of the most reverend and imposing traditions; for here were stones of the old castle of the Royal Bruces of Scotland, and of the Fauconbergs. As this gentleman was the bosom-friend of Mr. Sterne; as "Crazy Castle" was Mr. Sterne's second home, and the lives of the two companions are to be very intimately bound together, it may be worth while travelling over from Sutton to Guisboro', and seeing the strange species of life that was kept up at this curious mansion. It will be interesting, too, as furnishing an illustration of the singular manners of the time.

The "Crazy Castle" of Hall Stevenson's time was one of the strangest and quaintest bits of architecture that could be conceived. It was very ancient, very shattered, and was a pile of a most unique and

charming irregularity. It rose from the edge of a sort of dull and solemn lake, by a succession of terraces, fortified like bastions; on the topmost platform of which the old castle rambled away, right and left, in a succession of low corridors, propped up with buttresses, and which looked like cloisters—breaking out in the centre in a large clump of building. At one end was a tall, square, sturdy tower, very solid and threatening; while at the other rose a thin clock-turret, with a rusted cupola (such as are to be seen in old Belgian country-houses), and surmounted by a conspicuous weathercock. This picturesque but disorderly pile is said to have dated from the fifteenth century. Strange to say, its owner did not love it, and was always hankering after "demolitions," and a splendid restoration. Yet he sings of it very pleasantly,—

"There is a castle in the North,
Built upon a swampy clay,
At present but of little worth,
In former times it had its day."

The turret, with its rusted cupola and weathercock, was a conspicuous object in the Shandean landscape. It furnished innumerable jokes and illusions to Mr. Sterne and his friend:

"A turret also you may note,"

sings the owner again,

"It's glory vanished like a dream,
Transformed into a pigeon-cote,
Nodding beside the sleepy stream."

It will be seen later what a strange influence this

little construction exercised on the owner's sympathies. The winged creation who selected this spot for their residence were quite in keeping; for—

"—— owls and bats, and the jackdaw,
Their vespers and their Sabbath keep;
All night scream horribly and caw,
And snore all day in horrid sleep.
Myriads of rooks rise up and fly,
Like legions of damned souls,
As black as coals,
That foul and darken all the sky."*

Here, too, was to be the seen that "graceless fir" from Scotland, "*with its kindred fled*" (a happy stroke at the prevailing Scotch exodus); and on the lake, the boat which "so leaky is and old." On the titlepage of "Crazy Tales" is a good sketch of the castle as it then stood, with all these accessories of "leaky boat" and "graceless fir," and the turret degraded into a pigeon-cote.

The lord of Crazy Castle was of good family and connexions—his father, Colonel Hall, having married a daughter of Lord W. Manners. The Skelton Estates had passed to the daughters of Lord Conyers: the whole eventually became vested, both by marriage and by purchase, in the Trotters; and an heiress of that family marrying a Mr. Hall, brought with her all the Skelton property. Mr. Hall was born in 1718, and was thus but a few years younger than his friend Mr. Sterne. It has been seen they were at Cambridge, and belonged to the same college, where Hall was in the more distinguished

* Prologue to "Crazy Tales."

grade of fellow-commoner. Unfortunately, this agreeable promise was very early falsified; and he fell into the ways of the fashionable professors of vice, who in that day thrust their excesses upon the public with an outrageous effrontery and a shamelessness that passes belief. The orgies of the "Twelve Monks of Medmenham" were then attracting not so much reprobation as curiosity, and it is believed that this "ingenious young gentleman" was one of the unholy brotherhood.*

With this godless fraternity has Mr. Sterne's name been associated; and it is only another illustration of the charges which have been recklessly heaped upon him, that he has been announced, officially, as belonging to that order.† At the same time it must be conceded that, by his close fellowship with these merry but abandoned men, he has fairly laid himself open to a sort of partnership in their transgressions. And there is a Latin quotation in "Tristram," which has perhaps been never noticed, but which shows that, through his friend Hall, he was familiar with one of the secret *passwords*, as it were, of this Medmenham Society.‡ This accomplished gentleman had travelled much, and

* Such as are curious about the manners and habits of this strange society, may consult the "New Foundling Hospital for Wit," where there is a description of the "Abbey" by Mr. Wilkes: also Johnstone's "Chrysal," with the key, given in Davis's "Olio."

† See an entertaining Topographical Article in the "*Quarterly*"—on Berkshire.

‡ See "Tristram Shandy," vol. v., chap. 36, beginning—"An observation of Aristotle's," &c.

had taken the necessary degree, by making the Grand Tour many times. He was well skilled in foreign languages, and had mixed with the wittiest and highest in foreign countries. In the comparatively rude code of manners then prevailing, the travelled Englishman always stood out with a marked relief. But, unfortunately for his reputation, the course his reading took, and the society into which his cosmopolitan ideas led him, seem to have hopelessly depraved his tastes, even below the degraded standard then fashionable with men of the world; and, in the year 1762, he so far outraged public decency as to put forth a collection of metrical stories, entitled "Crazy Tales," which the late accomplished editor of the "Quarterly" has most justly described as "infamous." It does seem unaccountable how the temper of the age, corrupted as it was, could have endured such an outrage; and it seems strange that some titled Tartuffe, like the moral Sandwich, could not be found to stand up and, with matchless hypocrisy, deprecate this outrage upon public propriety. But it is yet more surprising that, at the decent era of 1795, an editor should have been found to undertake the pious office of collecting these uncleanly remains, assisted by "the worthy representative of the author's family, John Wharton, Esquire, of Skelton Castle, Member of Parliament for Beverly,"—who, "with the utmost liberality and politeness, presented the publisher with corrected copies of the greater part of these works,

with several original pieces." Considering, too, that he was upon the threshold of the present century, the editor had even the courage to defend his collection, and sneers at "some *over-delicate* persons." This was no excuse for writing such prurient stuff; and yet, it really gave the true reason for the toleration of such iniquities. As will be shown later on, the religious extravagances of Whitfield and his followers, with the contradictions of manners and professions it led to, were accountable for a license in another direction; and persons of neutral manners accepted these excesses with complacency, if only as a means of bringing fanatics to their senses. Thus, too, it was that the Puritan austerities gave birth to the free manners of Charles the Second's day.

These blemishes are the more to be lamented, as he seems to have been so accomplished a spirit, and adorned with an amiable and courteous disposition—charms which seemed to have attached to him a host of friends. Topham Beauclerck, Johnson's friend, also united this curious combination of a sweet and gracious temper with a wild license of speech and manners. If he at all deserve the encomium of his injudicious editor, he must have been a delightful companion: for he could engage "in the grand discussions of criticism and literature," and "enliven the general conversation with the smiles of Horace, or the laughter of Cervantes; or he could sit in La Fontaine's easy-chair," (Mr. Sterne had the monopoly of Rabelais), and unbosom his humour to his choice friends." "When he

resided in London," his apologist adds, complacently, "he lived *as other men of the world do*, whose philosophy partakes more *of Epicurus than the Porch*"—an odious "valet" style of euphemism, very much in favour at that time, and to be found in many introductions and prefaces of the day.

And yet this was the friend, the companion, and dearest intimate of the author of the "Sentimental Journey!" "some over-delicate persons" will exclaim; and, at first sight, the intimacy would appear significant of the truth of the well-known proverb about companionship. Both men, however, are entitled to some small measure of extenuation. The truth is, a great deal of these blemishes in their writings must be set to the account of the peculiar direction of their studies. Both had an almost fanatical relish for the odd racy humours of Rabelais and the minor pantomimists of his school; with both the appetite for that quaint and most original shape of wit and mirth increased with study and grew with acquaintance. Any one, indeed, who applies himself to this class of literature, must own the extraordinary fascination of this combination of perfect simplicity with a deep fund of mirth. He who has once tasted will find other drink insipid; yet it must be said that this drollery is so bound up with questionable matter, or perhaps the whole humour arises from the naïve fashion with which subjects we would ordinarily shrink from are dealt with, that, from long habit, the student is apt to forgive the matter for the manner, and find his sense

of delicacy wearing away. Indeed, the tone of these old jests—gross as many of them unquestionably are—is much akin to that coarseness prevailing in rude agricultural districts, which is considered harmless, and even praiseworthy, as the highest shape of bucolic wit. But this excuse cannot, after all, be so fairly applied to the case of Hall Stevenson as to his friend.

There is proposed, in this imperfect view of the life of Mr. Sterne, no wholesale extenuation, or universal scouring-down of an old figure, much grimed and soiled by long exposure. An honest sympathy is indeed essential, together with a certain warmth and generous advocacy; especially in the case of eccentrics and of wayward oddities, whose path has not been too straight, but to whose peculiar disposition some indulgence should be allowed. This may have been carried too far, and we have daily instances of an extravagance of panegyric, which is only fatal to the object thus glorified. As, in this chronicle of Mr. Sterne's ways and works, we are drawing near to the more delicate portions of his life, it may be stated in this place, there is no purpose of making him out a perfect man, or of defending what may not with decency be defended. Still—as "*cowardice and cruelty*, twin ruffians, hired and set on by *malice* in the dark, shall strike together at all thy infirmities and mistakes,"—there is something in the way of defence to be put forward; and we may recur, without danger of partiality, to the motto from the "Sentimental Journey," which

Mr. Sterne himself applied to the case of the old *remise*—"Something might be said for it, but not much; and when a few words," &c. In this spirit will the delicate story of Mr. Sterne's life be dealt with; and it will be understood that any apology offered will be in the spirit with which he himself pleaded for the old *remise*.

In this view it may seem difficult to say a word that could justify an intimacy with one who was believed to be affiliated to this profane order, and who professed to engage in its revolting and indescribable rites. "Something, however, might be said." There was the early friendship—the irresistible attraction of a kindred spirit; there were tastes almost exactly similar—wit, humour, and a quaint odd code of bearing: a species of verdure which in that vast Yorkshire desert became a precious oasis. In respect to such gifts it was then almost savage, and in a state of nature. Let it be remembered, too, that that stern, rigid moralist Samuel Johnson could not resist the fascinations of Topham Beauclerck, the wildest of London *roués*, and delighted in his company. The social joys of Crazy Castle and its merry men were, indeed, hard to resist. But there was a greater charm than all.

CHAPTER THE TENTH.

CRAZY CASTLE LIBRARY.

THERE was a Shandean library at Skelton that would have captivated the most ascetic of Dryasdusts—a precious mine of rococo learning, with the irregular veins of quaint old-fashionable simplicity, which so fatally ensnare the souls of collectors. Not so much the cold abstractions of black letter, or of costly editions, which is but a marrowless sort of folly: not so much the lunacy of the "Editio Princips," or the work that is "marked with a double R," in the catalogue, "which denoteth *rarissimus*;" or of the early Aldines, or exemplars taken off upon vellum or satin, or the elegances of the *Elzevirs*. This is but a cold, fleshless, and bloodless worship —a *grande passion* for a statue. But there is another worship—mumbo-jumbo some may call it—far more seductive; and this it was that ensnared Mr. Sterne and his friend. Those who are of the guild can understand it perfectly; can comprehend what witchery there is in little dainty, crabbed, old-fashioned books, bound in ribbed compact covers of sound morocco—once splendid in gorgeous crimson and gold, but now like the tarnished glory

of faded regimentals. How tempting are they, and how greedily clutched out of the squalor and indigence of the stalls! These are as bits of old china. More welcome still a morsel of old mottled calf, rich and dazzling in its tones, and variegated like a bit of marble—a fashion long since fallen out of favour. These were but the trappings, however, and, unaccompanied by more solid joys, but poor nutriment: they are charming accessories, but alone signally barren.

Upon the shelves at Skelton Mr. Sterne found and revelled in the most tempting and appetising feasts. Here were whole files of the Old-French "Ana"—those odd and unique collections of sayings and doings for the gathering of which that nation has always had a rare and special gift: a huge wallet of *qui-pro-quos*, *quolibets*, *coqs-à-l'ane*, and *Galimathias*. Here, too, were stores of that most piquant of reading, the little French collections of "*Contes à rire*," "*Histoires facétieuses*," "*Traits galantes*," which, in the grand globe of books, have a continent marked out for themselves. Here (on the lower shelves next the ground) were lumps of the precious Old-English bullion—the rich Fullеresque, so true and grand and simple, so rich and gorgeous, and with the fine Old-English musical ring. *That* art of casting, like the craft of the famous old bellfounders, is now unhappily lost. These grave worthies should have been in their original quaint suits: the short and narrow folio, the double line round the page, the bold blunted

letter, and the pale mellowed tone of the paper. Here he found the early folio edition of "Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy," possibly the first of the year 1617—which he did not filch from or break into burglariously, as it has been insinuated, but which he read and relished, and read again, until he had absorbed it, as it were, into his humorous system. No wonder its oddities broke out again in the pages of "Tristram."

Here, too, reposed "the learned Bishop Hall—I mean the famous Dr. Joseph Hall, who was Bishop of Exeter in King James the First's reign,"—who "tells us, in one of his decades at the end of his 'Divine Art of Meditation' ('Imprinted at London, in the year 1610, by John Beal, dwelling in Aldersgate-street')," how unbecoming is self-praise—no very original sentiment in the learned bishop; but those curious in old lore will find the true key to its introduction in the long sentence, purposely spun out, and which gives the melodious ring of the style and title of the book. That "imprinted at London" shows that his typographical heart is in the right place. Here, too, was the ponderous geographical folio of Cluverius, where it is to be suspected Mr. Sterne dipped for all local knowledge. Here he found, as indeed he acknowledged, that odd trait about the Goths, who took counsel when both drunk and sober—drunk to insure vigour, sober to secure discretion. In that huge volume he must have also found the localities for the route of "the sentiment which journeyed down the Ganges into

the Sinus Gangeticus or Bay of Bengal," &c. Nor was the Skelton library without a copy—and a fine copy, too—of "THE HERO OF CERVANTES," who Mr. Sterne would seem to have known by heart, and delighted in imitating. Every instant ideas strike him "of a Cervantick cast," and the critics of his time began to associate this adjective with his praises. It was Sancho that said that "sleep covered a man all over like a cloak,"—"which," says Mr. Sterne, "speaks warmer to my heart and affections than all the dissertations squeezed out of the heads of the learned together on the subject."

Montaigne was there too: Montaigne with his heart upon his sleeve—upon his brow—upon his mouth: witty, chatty Montaigne—the grandest egotist, and yet an egotist that never tires. Him we know Mr. Sterne to have read at Skelton, and, curious to say, it would seem he had not a copy himself of this true humourist's *Vade-mecum:* for while writing the second batch of "Shandys" at Coxwold, he approves of a sentiment of Montaigne—"It is admirable in its way (*I quote by memory*);" and he does give by memory a tolerably accurate reproduction of that pleasant "Meditation on Sleep." Here, too, were the squadrons of "the ablest canonists" who settled the point as to the baptising "a child of John Stradling's *in Gomine Gatris*, &c., &c., instead of *in nomine Patris*," &c.—deciding it to be an improper ceremony. There was here "*Spencer de Hebræorum legibus*," with "Brooks' Abridgment," and "Swinburn on Testaments,"

where he found the Duchess of Suffolk's famous case. He found here, too, the "Colloquies," "written by the chaste pen of the great and venerable Erasmus," in which lie buried more modern wit and fun than the world suspects. Here, too, was Rubenius on the "Costume of the Ancients," which Mr. Shandy consulted for lights as to the grand breeches-question—a small quarto that turns up occasionally at book-sales, and whose copperplates are really entertaining.

But among the treasures of Skelton was a very precious little work, in that day almost *introvable*—a little bit of typographical Old-French Henri II. ware—the "*Serées*" of Bouchet, or "Bouchet's Evening Conferences." It was then so extremely scarce that even "the most curious collectors of books," the famous Dr. Farmer included, had never seen a copy.* Curious to say, Doctor Ferriar, who had been long hunting for this treasure, at last succeeded in lighting on an odd volume of the book, which proved to be the very copy which Mr. Sterne had read at Skelton. Since that date *Bibliomania* has been made a sort of science, and has its skilled professors: it has become a trade, and been brought into a system; and by the sack of libraries on the Continent, what have been deemed scarce books have been multiplied. Here, too, were those strange textbooks on Nasal Learning—Andrea Paræus, Prignitz, Baldus, and Bruscambille—purchased by Mr. Shandy for "three halfcrowns." And here,

* Dr. Ferriar.

too, was that strange arsenal of military knowledge —Italian, French, and Latin—through which dear Uncle Toby rambled when fitting himself for carrying on his Flanders wars in his garden—which is, indeed, a little oversight in Mr. Sterne's drawing of the character: for it seems unlikely that a simple soldier of Queen Anne's time—a time when learning was more or less the monopoly of the learned professions, and of a disposition, too, so simple as to misapprehend the commonest allusions of Mr. Shandy's talk—should in his old age be competent to take up the higher mathematics and the abstruse theory of projectiles, and this too disguised in the scientific terms of foreign languages. Here he found "Ramelli and Cataneo;* likewise Stevinus Marolis, the Chevalier de la Ville, Lorini,† Cochorn, Sheeter,‡ the Count de Pagan, Le Marechal Vauban, and Mons. Blondel." It is not to be supposed that Mr. Sterne searched diligently through these profound works to gather military learning; but we can fancy him in the Skelton library of a wet morning, turning them over with much curiosity—as indeed the reader in this nineteenth century, weatherbound in a country-house, would find much entertainment in doing. Tartaglia's book has its odd pictures of cannons firing, and its diagrams showing the impossibility

* "Girolamo Novarese. Tavole brevissime per formare un guistissima battaglia." Mr. Sterne has confounded Cataneo with Catanea. The former wrote on Architecture; the latter was the military authority.

† The only Lorini discoverable is a Jesuit theologian.

‡ This sounds like one of Mr. Sterne's coined authors.

"of a cannon-ball doing all that mischief under his notion of a right line." Very quaint, too, are the dialogues on fearfully abstruse theories of the parabola, sustained, with the courtly politeness of the sixteenth century, between an Italian nobleman, an Italian artillery officer, and sometimes an English captain.* Stevenson and his friend would have been amused, too, with the rude cuts in Ramelli, which represent "*Le diverse e artificiose machine;*" and above all, they must have possessed that work "My Uncle" so dearly loved—the immortal Stevinus, who invented "the celebrated sailing chariot belonging to Prince Maurice," and which the learned Peireskius† "walked a matter of five hundred miles to see." And here too was Gobesius and his "Military Architecture."

Here also was that voluminous "*Acta Eruditorum*"—a sort of Latin *Gentleman's Magazine* in innumerable volumes, and a most curious compendium of old information. Mr. Sterne was not a profound student, and seems to have been exactly Thomas Moore in his black letters, tastes, and mode of study. Neither could endure the labour of regular mining in these rich districts, but did rather a little gardening; and to such these compendiums became invaluable.

At the same time he could not be long in such company—for the society of these old worthies is,

* Portions of Tartaglia have been recently translated into French.

† There is something of burlesque in the name of Peireskius, but it will be familiar to readers of Evelyn.

indeed, of a spiritualizing sort, and a man with a reverence for old books will have but a small corner left for the vices—without acquiring certain accomplishments, a more refined taste, and an acquaintance with languages. The Latin in Slawkenbergius' narrative is excellent—more truly idiomatic than most University Latin. Many years after he wrote his friend a buffooning Latin letter, which, on other grounds, should have been destroyed, but which is written in excellent comic Latin.

Long after, when the four first "Shandys" were out, Mr. Sterne got a library of his own. "I have bought," he writes to his friend, "seven hundred books at a purchase, dog-cheap, and many good. I have been a week getting them set up in my best room here."

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH.

YORICK AND EUGENIUS.

In front of Crazy Castle was the reservoir, with an inscription upon a sort of stone shield—an appropriate distich, that seems as though contributed by "Michael Woodhul, Esquire":—

> "Leap from thy mossy caverned bed—
> Hither thy prattling waters bring.
> Blandusian muse shall crown thy head,
> And make *thee*, too, a sacred spring."

Still the owner of Crazy Castle did not love the place—neither its pigeon-cote, nor its clocktower. It is wonderful he did not relish so appropriate an abode, and which was endeared to him by holding such good company. Mr. Sterne, however, liked it. From many quarters of the Continent his heart, untravelled, fondly turned to the old walls. He delighted in the print of it on "Crazy Tales," done by Stevenson himself; and far away, at Toulouse, looks at it "ten times a day, with a *quando te aspiciam*." He honours the man "who has given the world an idea of our parental seat." "Oh," he breaks out, "how are you all at Crazy Castle!" He was always scared at the notion of

the sacrilegious masons, and pleaded hard and comically for the old Shandean mansion. "But what art thou meditating with axes and hammers! . . . . thou lovest the sweet visions of architraves, friezes, and pediments, with their tympanums." He then hints at the specious pretext of the outlay being spread over many years—"*always added by the devil as a bait*"—and advises him to enjoy those years, which will be "the most precious morsels of thy life to come; and thou wilt do well to enjoy that morsel without cares, calculations, and curses, and damns, and debts; for as sure as stone is stone, and mortar is mortar, 'twill be one of the many works of thy repentance. However, destiny must be accomplished—whether you adorn your castle, and line it with cedar, and paint it withinside and withoutside with vermilion, or not."

During the life of Hall Stevenson this well-meant intervention was successful. It existed, safe but dilapidated, until the year 1788, when a grandson of Mr. Hall, who had become a Wharton, was seized with the fatal pestilence of pulling down and setting up. The unholy work was carried out wholesale, and with a sort of steady frenzy. The magnificent wooded glen in which it lay, as in a bowl, was flooded, the woods mercilessly cut down, and the strange rococo series of terraces barbarously levelled. The modernizers did their work with fury: not a stone was spared—not even the huge square Norman tower, almost unique in the kingdom. No wonder "the clergy-

man," mentioned in the "History of Cleveland," looked on "with tears in his eyes." The agent in this Gothic and discreditable business was one Mickle, a local builder; and this person "the clergyman" caused "to feel the lash of my tongue" —a little unjustly perhaps, but with a pardonable indignation.

In place of quaint old Crazy Castle, which in our own day would have been infinitely precious (for, happily, there is now a better feeling of reverence abroad), rose up a smooth, smirking, insipid edifice—very white, very correct, and wretchedly tame.* The successor of Eugenius was no doubt gratified with his work. For his money he had set up something infinitely chaste, clean, decent, and regular. The old irregularity had been happily swept away. There was a Lord Verulam in the present century, who actually levelled the fine old mansion of his great ancestor at St. Albans; and says Lord Granville—with a generous contempt that all must sympathise with—"Often have I looked at him in the House of Lords, as *he sat there in his insignificance!*" †

The lord of Crazy Castle is, of course, one of the figures in the Shandean gallery—a most genial and interesting picture of the best qualities one would desire in a friend. He is shown as the amiable monitor and counsellor of Yorick, with a

* The new building is described as "elegant and commodious; with an excellent modern staircase, and *a suit of genteel apartments.*"

† "Recollections" by Samuel Rogers.

perfect comprehension of the reckless gaiety of his friend, but at the same time with a nervous apprehension of the dangers such license must bring with it; and, dreading the time when that "multitude of small book-debts" (in the shape of smart jests and careless sallies) "one day or other must be reckoned with to the uttermost mite"—would lecture him upon discretion, in that most admirable piece of philosophy on light-speaking and its fatal social consequences, which shows how well Mr. Sterne had learnt what was worldly wisdom, though he lacked the resolution to put it in practice. The deathbed of Yorick, and Eugenius' bits of comfort—"there is still enough left of thee to make a bishop,"—is the *cheval de battaille* of our school "Speakers."

He outlived his friend many years; and was long pointed to as "Crazy Hall," and the Eugenius of Sterne. Some one saw him in the year 1775, and was struck by the "odd thin figure in a dark scratch wig—the more remarkable as everybody's hair was then powdered." The same eccentricity broke out in other members of the family, and in one of the histories of Cleveland there is to be found a very amusing account of an odd lady, whose strange ways were well known through the country.*

* The later history of the Halls is as follows:—Mr. Hall married Miss Anne Stevenson, of Durham—took her name, and died in 1785, sixty-seven years old. Their second son—the first died unmarried—became Irish by settlement, and married one of the Fermanagh Forsters. Their son was John Hall Stevenson, M.P. for Beverley, and took the name of Wharton.

All through he appears as a man of a sly, quiet, but not ill-natured humour, very much akin to Mr. Sterne's own; and the little glimpses we have of him in real life quite answer to his portrait. In Mr. Sterne's letters there are hints of his acting this good friendly part of moderator and adviser. Mr. Sterne writes to him in a strain specially affectionate and confidential, and altogether different from what he adopts to others. To him he discloses every thought freely. "I long to see thy face again!" he writes, again and again. Even Mrs. Sterne relished this delightful companion, and, though frowning, could not but enjoy his company. "She swears you are a fellow of wit, though humorous,—a funny, jolly soul, though somewhat splenetic, and (bating the love of woman) as honest as gold." If they talked together in the same droll Cervantic fashion in which they do in their letters, their company must have been entertaining indeed.

As in all eccentrics, there was a fine irregular line of oddity in Eugenius. He was sometimes visited by a sort of hypochondriacal humour, which usually preyed on him when the wind was in the east. To this point of the compass he had an aversion that amounted almost to rancour. When Crazy Castle was full of company, it was no surprise, of some sharp morning, to find their host absent, and suffering a moody imprisonment in his room*, so long as the wind was in this

* This room must have been in the great Norman "square tower,"

obnoxious quarter. His humour was known and accepted without astonishment. Upon the quaint old-fashioned clocktower was a weathercock, which was in full view of Eugenius' room; and when he rose in the morning, his first glance was at the fatal arrow, and its direction regulated the destiny of the day. This was a favourite subject for standing jests between them; and in his letters, Mr. Sterne often "drolls a little" upon this curious weakness. "I wish myself back again," he writes, after his triumphant visit to London, "but not because a thin death-doing pestiferous north-east wind blows in a line directly from Crazy Castle turret full upon me, in this cuckoldy retreat (for I value not the north-east wind, and all its powers—not a straw)." Mr. Sterne, too, would seem to have affected a sort of similar morbid temperament, more, it is to be suspected, out of a good-humoured fellowship for the frailties of his friend. His state of mind, "my dear Hall, depends much upon the *quotâ horâ* of your shabby clock: if the pointer of it is in any quarter between ten in the morning and four in the afternoon, I give it up. If the day be obscured by dark engendering clouds of either wet or dry weather, I am still lost. But who knows but it may be fine, and the day as fine a day as ever shone upon the earth since the destruction of

which seems to be the only point from which such a view could have been obtained. It would have been, too, a characteristic place for the lord of the keep. In one of his letters, Mr. Sterne clearly alludes to this choice of a room, where he mentions "Stevenson's return to his square tower."

Sodom; and, peradventure, your honour may have got a good hearty dinner to-day, and eat and drunk your intellectuals into a placidulish and a blandulish amalgama, to bear nonsense? So much for that." To this friend Mr. Sterne could be as Shandean, when scribbling, as he was to the public when spinning "Tristram." "Touched with thee (sensibility)" writes Yorick in his "Sentimental Journey," "Eugenius draws my curtain when I languish —hears my tale of symptoms, and blames the weather for the disorder of his nerves."

Once, when Crazy Castle was full of company, and the Shandean carnival rife, the wind suddenly veered round to this unlucky quarter, and with the usual embarrassing results. He imprisoned himself close in his room, spoke of "death and the east wind as synonymous," and by no persuasions could be got to stir from his chamber. But that arch-humourist, his friend Laury, was staying there, and to him a bright Shandean notion presented itself. He sought out an active urchin of the place, encouraged him overnight, by a sufficient bribe, to scale the weathercock tower, and tie down the arrow, in a due-west direction, with a strong cord. Early next morning the captive looked forth dismally from his "square tower," and joyfully observed the change; hurried down, ordered his horse, and took a smart ride, "execrating east winds:" Hall Stevenson was Hall Stevenson again! But a few days later the cord broke, and he relapsed.

At a distance this kind friend seems always

solicitous about this dangerous flaw in his character, and is always ready with cheering words and suitable encouragement. "I rejoice from my heart down to my reins," he writes from Toulouse, "that you have snatched so many happy and sunshiny days out of the hands of the blue-devils. If we live to meet and join our forces as heretofore, *we will give these gentry a drubbing*, and turn them for ever out of their usurped citadel. *Some legions* of them have been put to flight already; and I hope to have a hand in dispersing the remainder the first time my dear cousin sets up his banners again under the square tower."

The same anxiety shows itself in other more artful shapes. He had discouraged the craze for bricks and mortar, knowing what anxieties those demons bring with them when they enter into a man. But there were alum-works, which he was eager should be prosecuted on similar grounds. "I trust all goes swimmingly on with your alum—that the works amuse you, and call you *twice out, at least, a day*. I shall see them, I trust, in ten days or thereabouts. If it was in any way possible, I would set out this moment."* There is a delicacy in this consideration which speaks well for Mr. Sterne's good heart, and which is not often found at the bottom of convivial friendships.

* These Shandean alum works are busy at the present hour.

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH.

THE "DEMONIACS."

THOSE festivals at Crazy Castle must have been rare social entertainments—not over-straightlaced, it is to be suspected, and perhaps too Shandean by a good deal. Some of the choice actors in the game we can dimly identify.* The lord and master has rubbed them in with a free brush on the canvas of his "Crazy Tales." "What remain of the *Demoniacs*," says Mr. Sterne, in one of his letters, "greet for me."

Chief, then, among the "Demoniacs" came the host himself—"Cousin Antony," as Mr. Sterne always called his friend.

> "Here lies the body of John Hall,"

as John Hall himself sang in a comic epitaph,

> "Entombed within this castle wall,
> Impaired by time, not overthrown,
> Fairly subdued by sloth alone;

* A well-known Scotch antiquary was fortunate enough to acquire some thirty or forty of the originals of Mr. Sterne's printed letters at a sale, but, by some unaccountable indifference, parted with these curiosities one by one. Nothing could be more unfortunate: for in editing these letters there has been a clumsy suppression of names, which there was no need of suppressing, but which has left Mr. Sterne's life in sad confusion and obscurity.

That minds as much as the same weak ones,
The threats of bishops, priests, and deacons."

A pretty exact description of his character, in which a reverence for the sacerdotal element was not specially marked—what the French would call "an amiable Sybarite." He too was leavened with those old writers, in which his friend delighted—Trublet, Beroalde, Bouchet, and the rest, whose quips he had literally at his fingers' ends. The motto prefixed to his writings, from that charming poet Gresset, most happily described the *laissez-faire* principle of this epicurean in his writings:—

"J'abandonne l'exactitude
Aux gens qui riment par metier,
D'autres font des vers par étude,
J'en fais pour me désennuier."

Better still, the bold profession of faith of the Jester Trublet, and which was common to his friend Tristram:—

"On compose pour imprimer,
J'imprime pour composer."

From an "Ode to Vacation, 1758," beginning—

"Hence sage mysterious law,"

and various legal allusions, he would seem to have been at the bar; but it is plain he did not follow it with profit. Nor did he care about country sports:—

"Antony, Lord of Crazy Castle,
Neither a fisher nor a shooter."

Mr. Sterne delighted in naming him "Antony," or "My Cousin Antony"—a pleasant title, which has

mystified not a few. It seems very likely to have been suggested by the following facts. There is no certainty in such speculation, but there is a probability in this conjecture, now offered for the first time.

Travelling the byways and nooks of old York, Mr. Sterne had often passed a strange quaint building of ancient brick, supported on mouldy stone arches, and which was pointed out as "Antony's Hall." There were odd legends, of a Rabelais quaintness, associated with "Antony's Hall," which Mr. Sterne, and those of his humorous cloth, would have relished beyond measure;—how there had been here a foundation for eight brethren and a master; how every third year they gave a sort of banquet; how they went by the name of "Tantin Pigs," and how there was made a sort of offering or tribute of a pig, which was known as "Saint Antony's Pig." The brotherhood had long been swept away, but the tradition still spoke from the old walls. And as there was just such a society at Crazy Castle, akin to the Irish Monks of the Screw, it was natural enough that "Antony's Hall," and its jovial order, should suggest "Antony Hall,"* and eventually "My Cousin Antony," superior of his own order at Crazy Castle.

The lord of the castle had the model of some of the more famous Roystering Clubs before his eyes—those discreditable societies whose orgies have been

* He was not yet Hall Stevenson, but plain Mr. Hall. On his marriage with Anne Stevenson he assumed her name.

always spoken of too lightly. Mr. Sterne was the Coryphæus of the order:—

"In this retreat, whilom so sweet,
Our Tristram and his cousin dwelt,
They talk of Crazy when they meet,
As if their tender hearts would melt."

Under such leadership the spirits of the cheerful society were not likely to flag. Mr. Hall kept his house full:—

"Many a grievous heavy heart
To Crazy Castle would repair,
That grew, from dragging like a cart,
Plastic and as light as air.
Some fell to fiddling, some to fluting,
Some to shooting, some to fishing;
Others to pishing and disputing
Or to computing by vain wishing."

These innocent pastimes filled in the day agreeably enough. When night set in there were other entertainments:—

"And in the evening when they met,
To think on't always does me good,
There never met a jollier set
Either before or since the flood."

Music, too, was not wanting, and there was a "bass viol" ready there to be touched, "*con furia*," by the nimble fingers of Mr. Sterne. "For," sings the host, imitating the sweet ring of Milton's "L'Allegro"—

"——— within doors let me meet
The viol touched by fingers neat."

"The Blackbird" seems to have been the familiar sobriquet by which the Vicar of Sutton was known in this free society; where, "instead of psalmody and

prayers, like the good children of St. Francis, he secularised all his airs." The pleasant influence of the ecclesiastical "Blackbird" is happily described, but at the expense of the established decencies:—

> "Even here there are some holy men,
> Would fain lead people by the nose,
> Did not a blackbird now and then
> Benevolently interpose."

Of the "Demoniacs" was also the Reverend Robert Lascelles, one of the Harewood family—a sort of joker in orders, quite after Mr. Sterne's own heart—a sort of Cervantic priest. He was known among the brotherhood under the style and title of "*Panty*," which was complimentary to his powers of humour, but scarcely to his cloth—"Panty" being a familiar contraction from "Pantagruel," one of Rabelais' heroes. He is rarely forgotten in Mr. Sterne's letters to the Abbot: "Greet Panty most lovingly on my behalf." "Saluta amicum Panty meum, cujus literis respondebo." "Panty" has a truly Cervantic chime, and does honour to Mr. Sterne's powers of adaptation. He seems to have been a smoker too, from a pleasant *jeu d'esprit* his friend and host made upon what he called "Panty's sweetheart," who had—

> "——— a light, wanton air,
> As stiff as a stake, and worse for the wear;
> If her lips are like rubies and warm as a toast,
> Her face is as thin and pale as a ghost.
> If after all you are hard of belief,
> And would fain know her name, then turn over the leaf."

And turning over the leaf, the answer is found in the shape of "A CLAY PIPE!"

Zachary Moore was another of the company, though scarcely so steady a member of the order as some of the rest. His host sings of him affectionately—

"What sober heads hast thou made ake,
How many hast thou kept from nodding;
How many wise ones for thy sake,
Have flown to thee and left off plodding?

"Philosophy and grace are thine,
Not *spiritual grace*, but sprightly,
Inspired like the God of Wine,—
Inspired like Old Anacreon nightly."

The issue of these social gifts was according to the immemorial precedent. "Who after associating with most of the great personages of these kingdoms," says a scornful epitaph that was made upon him—"who did him the honour to assist him in the work of getting to the end of a great fortune; was exalted, through their influence, in the forty-seventh year of his age, to an ensigncy, which he actually enjoys at present in Gibraltar." Mr. Sterne, who had heard this melancholy story spoken of at Crazy Castle, must have thought of "Captain Philips," and the quarrel about the goose, and the "little smart man," who was so gentle, and who was now sleeping far off in Jamaica.

There was also belonging to the society a very eccentric character named "William Hewitt," more familiarly known as "Old Hewitt," who died the year before Mr. Sterne died. Readers of Smollett's "Peregrine" will recollect a foot-note devoted to

his praises.* He is described as "a sensible old gentleman, *but* much of a humourist." (The antithesis of these two qualities is highly characteristic of the society at Crazy Castle.) Beyond this commendation there is little known of his life; and his death was truly Shandean. He had travelled much, and at Venice found himself stricken with what seemed to be a mortal and lingering disease. Like a true Sybarite, he determined "to take himself off by abstinence." He assembled his friends, made jokes, entertained his company with music, and, curious to say, on the third day—as the unexpected result of this treatment—found himself perfectly cured. He, however, refused to alter his mode of life, saying that, "now the most disagreeable part of the voyage was over, he should be a cursed fool indeed to put about ship when he was just entering the port." And so the chronicle goes on—"He finished his course with such ease and serenity as would have done honour to the firmest Stoic of antiquity." How far it would have done honour to the Christian gentleman of modern times is not exactly insisted on.

Another of these merry men was one alluded to as "Don Pringello," an architect, but which fanciful name is clearly a disguise for Pringle. He was said to have had the fanciful notion of going round foreign countries and repairing fine old palaces that were in a state of dilapidation—a pious duty for

* He turns up also in the two sumptuous antiquarian quartoes, which Mr. Holles published in the last century.

which, as may be imagined, neither his funds nor his time sufficed. He came over specially to Yorkshire to rebuild Crazy Castle, but was so struck with its quaint beauties, that he refused to have hand in the sacrilegious work, and joined in dissuading the owner from any such plans. There was, besides, the "Privy Councillor," who may have been Sir Francis Dashwood; the incompetent Chancellor of the Exchequer (of licentious morals and of worse figures), who was to become Lord Le Despencer, and bury one of the Medmenham Monks, Paul Whitehead, in his own garden, with profane obsequies, in imitation of forms classic. There was also the "Student of Law," the Governor of Tilbury, and Thomas of Colebey. This latter is likely enough to have been the Sir T—— S—— of the Medmenham order. The person who is alluded to as "Cardinal S——," in Mr. Sterne's remembrances at the close of his letters was "great Scroope," a well known Yorkshire name. He sends his love frequently to "the two Colonels," one of whom was Colonel Hall, a relation of the host; the other possibly the Colonel Lee, whom we saw figuring at Harrogate.

There is now, at Skelton, a curious book of rules concerning a sort of jovial village society, which was formed after Mr. Sterne's death, with a list of members, and fines for non-attendance and breach of the rules. Among the Companions of the Order were a "Colonel Atkinson," another of Mr. Sterne's jovial colonels; Andrew Irvine, an

eccentric schoolmaster; the Rev. "Panty" Lascelles, and others.* This makes up the roll of the "Demoniacs," greater and less, and gives a very curious illustration of the manners of the period, which was presently to break out into "Hellfire Clubs" and all manner of unholy confederations.

* See a communication to "Notes and Queries" from Mr. Durant Cooper, F.S.A.,—a gentleman who has been kind enough to search for papers at Skelton Castle, but without success.

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH.

YORKSHIRE POLITICS.

Meanwhile, the Reverend Mr. Sterne is not degenerating into a mere rustic parson: bucolic mosses and mildews were not to gather about him. York was but an hour's ride away, and he was not slow to seize the opportunity of shaking his garments free of the agricultural savour. He was to be seen entering the city in a slow meditative fashion, like his own hero, who had travelled from the famous nasal promontory, yet not exactly mounted on the sorry beast which Parson Yorick kept for loaning to needy parishioners. As he came across the York Rialto, or ambled up Coney Street, halting at the "Old George" Inn, people were beginning to know him, and point him out as the nephew of Doctor Sterne (the well-known political parson), and a very rising young cleric.

That dignitary had prospered amain; his apostolic labours in fortifying the Whig faith had not gone unrequited. So fierce a champion could not, indeed, be denied with safety; and he was now almost incumbered with preferment. He was Archdeacon of Cleveland; and on the death of Doctor

Dering, in 1750—another pluralist, who held both the Deanery of Ripon and the Archdeaconry of the East Riding—Doctor Sterne was preferred to the latter office; so that at his death his roll of honours rang sonorously to this tune:—A Canon Residentiary of York; a Prebendary of York; Precentor ditto; Prebendary of Durham; Rector of Driffield; Rector of Rise, and Vicar of Hornsea and Ritson, and Archdeacon of the East Riding.

Hornsea and Rise are inconvenient cures, sadly exposed, upon the coast, and not very far from the commercial city of Hull. Hornsea is wellnigh encircled by the sea, and the steeple of its church served almost as well as a Pharos to sailors. It is not likely that the absorbed divine, who had the spiritual interests of Driffield to look to, as well as the precentorship and archdeaconries—to say nothing of the political care of a huge slice of a huge county—could have bestowed much pastoral teaching on the obscure denizens of Hornsea and Rise. It is significant, and to be noted, that these last two benefices were presented not by individuals, but by the Government, in whose gift they were.

That unhealthy state of parties in the huge county still continued. The playing the part of a Liberal Tory, in these times, would appear to have been fraught with special personal peril or, at least, serious inconvenience. Any antagonism of the weaker party was at once stamped with disaffection; and the repression of even mere civic opposition by the stronger side took the shape of an insolent domi-

nation. Allowance must be made for both these extreme tones; for the critical year of '45 was now drawing on.

It seems curious how this active parson should have taken up this political coat of boisterous loyalty; for nearly all the traditions of the Sterne family were Jacobite. The archiepiscopal memory was still cherished; and it has been mentioned that there was a Sterne actually then following the Pretender, who had presented his faithful servant with his portrait;—a sore trial for one of such stanch principles as Jaques Sterne, LL.D., and a positive incentive to more vigorous exertion in the popular cause of loyalty.

This angry venom leavened every social proceeding in the country. The project of an infirmary—then sadly wanted—was started: a sort of humane neutral ground, on which it might be thought political enemies might meet without battle. But the proposition was already tainted by coming from a Radical source; and, accordingly, the old party-war is waged again over the subscription-lists. Here, again, we detect the footprints of "Jaques Sterne, LL.D.;" for when Lady Elizabeth Hastings is ready to come forward with five hundred pounds, "a clergyman, then in a high station in the Cathedral of York," comes forward to dissuade her. The lady afterwards showed the letter to Prebendary Lamplugh, who "divulged it to the public with indignation." Persons of influence, however, took up the project, and the infir-

mary was established. This unpleasant feeling was productive of such disagreeable fruits, that many families preferred to leave the place, rather than undergo the persecution they were exposed to.

But here we are now in the heart of that year of trouble and feverish disquiet called the 'Forty-five, when Prince Charles is holding levees at Edinburgh; and every loyal man, though sure in the main that all true subjects will stand by the throne, and scourge these barelegged Scotchmen home, is yet nervous and ill at ease. He sees a quiet exultation in his neighbour's eye—long suspected as a Jacobite's. It is no season for delicacies and apologies. Expresses come in that the Highlanders, having finished the theatrical show in Edinburgh, are coming south; so the *habeas corpus* must be suspended, and true loyalists everywhere make themselves into a sort of Star Chamber, with rough-and-ready and inquisitorial powers. Suspicion shall, for the nonce, be quite as good as gospel: all not with us taken to be against us; and the first aim, to sift the good men from the bad, and let us know our danger.

In the heat of this fermentation, the Right Hon. John Raper, Lord Mayor, calls a special meeting in the City of York itself, to be attended by all good citizens, and where some two thousand five hundred pounds are laid down. Trainbands are started; the "York Blues," with soldiers and drummers at seven and ten shillings a week, and officers serving gratuitously, with the newly-formed corps of "Independents" (gentlemen and traders),

to be under arms for ten months to come. It was altogether a time of great fluster and activity, and obstreperous loyalty.

Accordingly, on the 24th of September, 1745, York Castle sees a large, influential, and tumultuous meeting within its walls. All wellwishers to their country attend; and the Archbishop, Doctor Herring, takes the chair. Highlanders, or rumours of Highlanders, are still abroad: so there is an earnestness of purpose in the acts and speeches, which manifests itself in a sum of nearly thirty-two thousand pounds as a free gift to Government, but with some special reference to the interests of the great county of York. His lordship stimulated them with an address, and over eight hundred of the nobility and gentry are represented by that handsome subscription. The list was printed for the encouragement of loyal persons; and the little thin quarto, rescued from the inevitable fate of such flying-sheets, is still to be seen. Turning it over, we find a symptom of an enthusiastic co-operation, in the entry of

"Jaques Sterne, £50,"

—a handsome amount for Mr. Precentor. And, sheltered by that influential name, is read the first introduction of our hero to public life—

"Lau. Sterne, Clerk, £10,"

—also a handsome sum, in proportion to the means of the Lieutenant's son, and the Vicar of Sutton. But it was, as it were, a loan laid out at good

clerical interest; and the nephew had, no doubt, been fortified with useful advice from the uncle.

The Crofts of Barford, Laurence's neighbours and parishioners (a thriving county family), gave no more—a good evidence that he had exceeded the measure that fitted an humble ecclesiastic. The Archbishop headed the list with two hundred pounds; and Stillington, Mr. Sterne's own cure, stands for the very modest figure of seven pounds.

CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH.

DOCTOR SLOP.

At this critical moment, it fell out there was living in York a medical practitioner, of some celebrity, named Burton. His peculiar specialty, for which he enjoyed a high local reputation, lay in assisting ladies in special emergencies where so much rests on the skill of the assistant; and on this branch he had written a work, which, in the barbarous state of science at this date, would appear to have been of value. He was also a man of good antiquarian knowledge, leavened with an honest enthusiasm about dead old charters and yellow records, which it is pleasant to see and hard not to respect —a reverence which developes itself in all the resources of tall folio, royal paper, widest margin, and sumptuous typography. This is the homage that antiquarian simplicity loves to lay at the feet of its subject. Our own age is grown penurious in its decorations, and dresses its subjects as cheaply as it can. The "Yorkshire Monasticon"—a stately folio, which is yet incomplete—remains a fine monument of the antiquarian accoucheur. This would never have helped him to an immortality; but he

himself, with his fatal midwifery treatise under his arm, was destined to descend to posterity—the ludicrous Doctor Slop of "Tristram."

His life was a curious one—an odd jumble of medicine, political agitation, and antiquarian exploration. He was born at Ripon, in the year 1697; went to Oxford, but took a degree at a foreign university.* He seems to have possessed a wonderful enthusiasm, which alone could have carried him through all his troubles. There is something very pleasing in his earnest antiquarian labours; for to the end of his life he was busy, collecting charters and memorials about his old Yorkshire antiquities, which he loved in his heart, digging into mounds and Danes' hills, at "Skipwith" and other places—in short, never flagging, in spite of open persecution and secret suspicion. The learned societies of the time acknowledge his ardour and industry, by electing him a member; and he wrote the letters F.R.S. and F.S.A. after his name. With prodigious industry he had collected an enormous mass of papers relating to Yorkshire, which, near the end of his life, he afterwards disposed of to secure an annuity for himself and his wife.

With equal ardour he pursued his special calling, and attained great practice and local celebrity in his own familiar branch of the profession. He had gone abroad expressly to study, and

* He is constantly confounded with another doctor, a theologian, and also an antiquarian,—Warburton's "Puppy."

had been a pupil of the famous Boerhaave. The troubles of '45 passed away, yet the accoucheur-antiquary had not learned prudence. It was said, that about this time, he "broke"—perhaps in consequence of the interruption to his business—for the large amount of five thousand pounds, which it was insinuated was made up by the Radical party in the town.

It came to the year 1754, when "Mr Sheriff Jubb" gave a grand entertainment in York, at which were Dr. Rushton and a Mr. George Thompson. At this festival some extra-loyal toasts were given, which the physician refused to drink; and the result was a scene and a quarrel between him and Mr. George Thompson. The latter pointedly appealed to the public, in a pamphlet outrageously personal, in which all matters of personal interest—utterly beside the question at issue—are introduced. The insinuation of "Popery" is again craftily introduced; and his learned ecclesiastical history is allowed to be a useful labour, and likely to be serviceable in case of the coming-in of a foreign power. That very year, with his domestic trouble on his hands, he is busy corresponding with London antiquaries; finds time to attend the races, and is even seen at the ball in Lord Burlington's assembly-rooms, where he sprained his foot seriously.

This is all we know of him, save that he died in the year 1772, having outlived the man who sketched him in "Tristram." Perhaps that was the

most serious of all his trials—to be known and pointed at as the burlesque Doctor Slop!* For the men of Yorkshire have long since forgotten all about "Jaques Sterne, LL.D.," the Domitian of local Whigs, and the arrest when the Highlanders were expected; but the whole world, for ages to come, will shed tears of laughter over the tragi-comical adventures of Doctor Slop!

The people of York had a faith in him which the irreverence of Trim and Mr. Shandy had not. They were accustomed to that "little squat uncourtly figure, of about four feet and a half perpendicular height, with a breadth of back and a sesquipedality of belly which might have done honour to a sergeant in the Horse Guards, waddling through the dirt upon the vertebræ of a little diminutive pony." He was well known in the country districts; and was often seen along the Yorkshire bridle-roads, thus strangely mounted, hurrying away to assist the ladies of "Tom O'Stiles," or "John Noakes," in their illnesses; familiar, too, in the City of York, in other directions besides his profession—and odious as a fly in the political ointment to the high apostles of loyalty who ruled the city.

Romney was at this time a pupil of Steele, an indifferent portrait-painter, who was then travelling from town to town as "an itinerant dauber."† He

* Doctor Belcomb assured Doctor Ferrier that the tradition was long kept alive in York.

† So he is called by Cumberland.

came to York about the year 1754 or 1755, and his studio was often visited by the Vicar of Sutton. But Mr. Sterne took more notice of the work of the pupil than of the master, and, with a discrimination which did credit to his judgment, praised and encouraged the youth who showed such promise. Such patronage, we are told, helped on Romney (who had just then made an imprudent marriage), but excited the jealousy of the master, "Count Steele," as he was called: for there were numbers "who echoed Mr. Sterne's opinions."

This youth must have known by appearance the doctor, who was then one of the public characters of York: and when, long after, he came to paint many subjects from "Tristram Shandy," he could scarcely have shut out the accoucheur's peculiar figure. There are therefore fair grounds for assuming that his picture of Doctor Slop is in some respects a likeness.* He is there represented as something actually deformed, with a gross head and face disproportioned to his shapeless trunk—a really comic figure, and yet with something odious and venomous. It is to be noted that the other faces in the picture are without character, and of the smooth conventional pattern significant of Romney; whereas these Slop features have a bold character and outline, as though they had left their mark upon the artist's memory.

Nothing can more fitly illustrate the injustice of the treatment of this unfortunate practitioner than

* See "Life of Romney."

the way in which his poor "five-shillings book" has been dealt with. The truth is, it was a work in advance of its time, being stored with practical cases and examples, without the useless theories which disfigure most medical treatises of the day. Long after his death, it received a posthumous tribute in the shape of a French translation, at the hands of a Doctor Le Moyne (not one of the Sorbonne trio, "Messrs. Le Moyne, De Romigny, and De Marcilly," who, it will be recollected, gave judgment upon a delicate baptismal point);* and in its new shape the famous plates were introduced to the French "chirurgien-accoucheurs."

The "five-shillings book" was entitled, "An Essay towards a complete new System," and is ushered in by complimentary letters from various learned societies. This is a certain grateful salve for the poor accoucheur's wounded feelings; and even in this inappropriate domain he contrives to bring in a sort of political protest. "This approbation," he writes in his preface, "of different societies is no less a satisfaction than an honour done me, as it will certainly be a means of depriving those *who abound with ill-nature, envy, and detraction* of their greatest pleasure,"—a stroke clearly pointed at old clerical enemies. But the accoucheur's forceps descends with even more severity. "But for those people who, *like birds of night*, scream in the dark when none can see them, like cowardly enemies, shoot their envenomed darts at

* "Tristram Shandy," vol. i., chap. xx.

me, in secret whispers or papers: such creatures may spit their malignant choler till it consume themselves, before I shall regard them in the least." Poor practitioner, this was but an idle boast! He afterwards, still *apropos* of his special department, makes an ingenious profession of political faith: —"*As I have* always professed myself an advocate to serve my country to the utmost of my power, I do in this (as *I have done in all* occurrences) *prefer the public* good to my own private interest." He had still that uneasy feeling of being "suspected" by loyal citizens, and justifies himself in this round-about fashion, in the midst of a cloud of interesting cases.

CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH.

DOCTOR SLOP'S ARMOURY.

"It is very strange," said Mr. Shandy, fuming over his domestic troubles, "as there is so expert an operator as Doctor Slop so near, that my wife should persist to the very last in this obstinate humour of hers, in trusting the life of my child to the ignorance of an old woman." But if Mr. Sterne had indiscreetly left Doctor Slop's "five-shillings treatise" upon his study-table, and Mrs. Sterne had seen those awful pictures, which seem like the instruments in the torture-room of the Tower, it was not surprising that her heart should sink at the thought of so terrible an operator: for here were "thy tire-tête, thy new-invented forceps, thy crotchet!"*

Unluckily, there is in this physician the old antiquarian vein, and reverence for a roll of learned names, which are set out in long and formidable rows at the beginning of his book. These harsh Latinised denominations have an odd burlesque

* Their terrors fade before a fearful engine, Doctor Slop's own invention, and which he describes with pride as "the author's New Extractor," which was furnished with "four claws," a "steel slider," and rows of jagged teeth.

ring really ludicrous, and very dangerous, should they fall into the hands of a humorous enemy. Thus, when Mr. Sterne read of such odd nomenclature—"Gutterman," and "Stalpadt," and "Roonhusius," and, above all, "De Venter on the Ars Obstetrica," no wonder that he should quote "Albosius at the end of Cordæus' works in *Spachius,*" together with that cloud of authorities given later, which so admirably satirize other learned writers of the day, as well as Doctor Slop. Unluckily, too, there was a Scotch Doctor Smellie, distinguished also in Doctor Burton's branch of the profession, who had attained notoriety by the invention of the "wooden" forceps, and also by ingenious bits of mechanism, representing the human figure, on which he used to lecture to his students. It was natural that Doctor Burton, in addition to his other quarrels, should become embroiled with this professor, whom Mr. Shandy clearly alludes to under the name of "Adrianus Smelvogt," and who had introduced to the public a curious specimen of a petrified child, which he called "Lithopædus Senonensis." Doctor Smellie, however, fell into the ludicrous mistake of taking this description for the proper name and country of some learned medical pundit, and actually quotes it in his imposing list of authorities. Mr. Sterne has given the mistake immortality in a note:—"Mr. Tristram Shandy has been led into this error, either from seeing Lithopædus' name of late in a catalogue of learned writers *in Dr.* ——, or by

mistaking Lithopædus for Trinecavellius, from the too great similitude of the names."

He also wrote a singular metaphysical work on "The Non-naturals," at which Mr. Shandy, flying past on his swift Arabian, launched a swift arrow.* In the year 1758, came out the grand folio, before alluded to in the "Ecclesiastical History of Yorkshire," ushered in with a quaint and garrulous preface, quite characteristic of the man. He boastfully sets out how he had disinterred and examined over 2,000 charters, and how he had always "a kind of natural curiosity to penetrate into the darkest and most remote state of my country, which increased upon me as I proceeded;"—even up to the time when he gave up travelling in foreign countries, and came home "to follow my profession as a physician and man-midwife." He apologises for omissions on account of "frequent and severe fits of the gout." There is but a slender list of subscribers; but still they are good names, and set out with a most amusing pomposity. "George Fox Lane, of Bramham Park, Esquire, one of the Representatives in Parliament of this City, and Lord Mayor *thereof* in the year 1757," took a copy; as did also "Edward Wilson, Esquire, LL.D., eldest son of Sir Thomas Wilson, of Usfield and Eastbourne, in Sussex, Baronet." Various others, not so

* The "ingenious" Doctor Ferriar, in his first edition, took this "forced sneer" as being directed at a more famous Burton, who wrote the "Anatomy of Melancholy."

distinguished, have yet their proper designations of "Attorney-at-Law," and "Counsellor-at-Law," scrupulously attached to their names. A full list is promised in the second volume, but it never reached to that glory. Even the copy in the British Museum reached that establishment by the pleasant agency of presentation, and has an inscription in the Doctor's own handwriting.

He lived but eight miles away from Shandy Hall, and had invented the famous tire-tête. He was clearly a Jacobite, and led the opposition in that infirmary business and election agitation. He is universally accepted as being a Roman Catholic; which has been charitably credited to the Reverend Laurence as a motive for niching him into his famous book. This is a mistake. His dedication to Archbishop Herring, where he speaks of "your warm attachment to our laws and religion, which are the foundation and bulwark of our liberties," does not read as though he belonged to the old faith. Neither would any allusion to the "antique supporters of arbitrary power, in the days of ignorance, superstition, and slavery," be likely to come from a Catholic, against whom they were in those days favourite cries of reproach. A sentence, however, in a letter of his to Dr. Ducarel conclusively settles the question: to whom he wrote that he meant to dedicate his book to the Archbishop of Canterbury, "as he is so deservedly placed at the head of *our Church*."*

* Nichol's "Literary Anecdotes."

The truth is, he was charged with professing that creed—as in those times it *was* a serious charge—with about the same recklessness that he was indicted for being a Jacobite; the profession of one set of principles being held to be a strong presumption of holding the other.

There were old arrears of prejudice against this accoucheur-politician, from that election-time, eleven or twelve years before, when he put himself forward conspicuously to work the interest of Sir Rowland. He had started the infirmary party-question, and had bearded the powerful Doctor Sterne. That clergyman bore him no love,—nay, had marked him down in his black-book, as one to be watched carefully in any perilous season. The perilous season was now come round, and he will have the disaffected accoucheur upon the hip.

The troubled year of 1745 set in. They were in all the flurry of expected danger at York. Express has come to the Lord Mayor, that the Highlanders have got as far as Kendal, and no one knows whether they will come down by way of Yorkshire or Lancashire.

Luckless Doctor Burton had estates in the Yorkshire Road, with moneys lying there (some hundred and twenty pounds), and posted to the Recorder to ask for leave to go out and save his effects—a request at that season to be regarded with reasonable suspicion, being in effect going to meet the enemy. Leave is given him; he goes, is captured, set free, and returns to York. But

there, one terrible "priest" determines, "with others of the same leaven," to turn it to his profit. They bring him before the Recorder, and "one of the priests made a great blustering; he was often in such a hurry with party-fury that he could not utter his words; he perfectly foamed at the mouth, especially when I laughed, and told him I set him and all his party at defiance."* However, that evening he was in York Castle, under a committal, signed "T. Place" and "J. Sterne."

Having got his victim in his power, this vigorous clergyman writes a newspaper paragraph, detailing the arrest, and sent it up to London for insertion in *Lloyd's Evening Post.* He added an artful paragraph at the close, that "there was the greatest satisfaction expressed, from the highest to the lowest person in this city, that has been known here upon any occasion." This the printer wished to omit, as it was notorious that Doctor Burton was popular with the lower classes; but the truculent clergyman ordered its instant insertion.

Some irregular practices follow, in which Jaques Sterne is signally conspicuous, signing innumerable warrants against the unhappy Burton: and when it was suggested that the prisoner was in custody for a misdemeanor only, it was noticed that Dr. Sterne was greatly staggered, "scratched his head, and looked very pensive." Finally, Doctor Burton was brought up to London, kept in custody for nearly a year, and then discharged, having suffered

* Burton's Narrative, "Liberty Endangered."

severely both in person and pocket by his imprisonment. It had been better that he had kept to his practice and his antiquities. Later strange charges were insinuated against his persecutor, of tampering with witnesses, and offering them large bribes to swear suitably.

Two little scraps of satisfaction were afterwards vouchsafed to the injured Burton. Lord Carteret was pleased to direct a letter of reprimand to be sent to "Jaques Sterne, LL.D.," for his irregularly zealous efforts; and the City of York being applied to formally to requite these great services by the "present of their freedom," the proposition was declined by that body. But these mere civic rebuffs cannot stay the tide of party-earned promotion; and by-and-by shall come that East Riding archdeaconry and the Durham prebend.

Meantime Accoucheur Burton advises his enemy "to exchange his politics for piety," and drops under the surface at this place, to appear later under infinitely more unpleasant circumstances. It is not unlikely that Laurence, in his troubled days, came in to play clerical aide-de-camp to his uncle. Long after he was to give as their cause of quarrel, that his uncle wanted him to "write party paragraphs in the newspapers," which curiously fortifies Burton's statement as to the paragraph affecting his arrest; a strange illustration of the blind virulence of feeling then abroad, when a person in the position of Dr. Sterne could condescend to such grossly unfair weapons. The justification was, indeed, in the season,

which was critical and ticklish in the highest, there being a host of undecided citizens hovering suspended between the new and the late Successions, who were only waiting the first gust of success to declare themselves;—a season when elegant formularies, and the nicest adherence to established forms would be clearly out of place. At this point Burton retires for the present; henceforth he shall take to the monastic antiquities, to the "Non-naturals," and the famous forceps or tire-tête.

CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH.

A NIGHT-PIECE.

The Highlanders having happily flocked down the Lancashire Road, York breathes again; but the "Independents" and "York Blues" are still busy with their training and "coloneling." But presently arrives news of the great victory: Ducal Butcher Cumberland has trampled out the rebellion, in the bloody fight at Culloden. The Scotch are now flying home, scattered like spray. The Prince of Hesse, coming home from the battle to London, takes York in his road; stays a day, and after mayoralty compliments, proceeds on his road: "The illustrious character" he is called, in the "effusion" of local journalism. But presently it is known that a yet more "illustrious character" will pass by—that the red-handed "hero" himself will be journeying home; so the Lord Mayor and Corporation send him an invitation by express to visit their city. He is pressed for time, but will accommodate them—great jubilee here for all loyal hearts! The assizes, too, are in full work, busy with the luckless rebels; so that the spectacle will be "improving," and could not be better timed.

On the 24th of May, then, 1746, between nine and ten in the evening, the "illustrious" Duke, attended by Lords Cathcart and Ancram, made his entry, with Minster-bells ringing furiously,—to the great joy of all true lieges. And yet the glory of this night did not so much fall on his head, as on one much lowlier in the community. Whom was he likely to honour with his company —Archbishop or Lord Mayor? Who was to present the "freedom" in a gold box?

The tradition of this night is still kept alive in the Sterne family. It is told that the hero actually sent on word by express that he would alight—not at the houses of the grand functionaries just mentioned, but at the modest ecclesiastical residence of the lowly Precentor, "Jaques Sterne, LL.D." in the Minster Yard. So shall all loyal hearts be requited. Wormwood and confusion for spirits such as the hapless Burton, actually then before the judges getting his bail discharged!

It is still remembered what terror and confusion this unexpected honour cast into the family of the favoured Precentor. How was he to entertain so noble a guest? A niece is sent for (no doubt that niece estranged from Mr. Sterne "*by my uncle's wickedness*, and her own folly"), who is to co-operate, with such female aid as is requisite; a hard day's work, with moreover a Damocles sword dangling over their heads—a duty of being ready at any moment: for it is not known the instant he may be looked for. Weary at last, and doubtful whether

the hero *will* come on this day, the niece is permitted to go home, with, however, earnest injunction that as soon as the Minster-bells fall to a-jangling, she should hurry back. Towards midnight, when all hope was reasonably dismissed, she is roused by the bells tumultuously pealing, dresses in a flurry, and arrives in time to assist. A not unpicturesque scene :—the Minster Yard and its ancient tenements; the noble Minster at the back, indistinct; bells riotous, soldiers afoot, torches blazing and flaring; the "Blues" out, the whole city in the streets, the ducal hero and staff riding up to the Precentor's door (a brilliant night for the House of Sterne specially; the niece often told the story) ;—the Archbishop, the two Judges; the Mayor and Corporators, with their "freedom" in the gold box; the refection upstairs, partaken of hurriedly; the speeching, the final departure after midnight; torches again, soldiers again, bells riotous once more, and farewell to Mr. Precentor at his own door:—a not unpicturesque sight, and one to be remembered. Was the Reverend Laurence of the noble company; nobody *then* cared to set down whether he were or not. But we may be sure he had come in from Sutton to share in Uncle Precentor's glories, and helped to pen a descriptive paragraph the next day for *Lloyd's Evening Post.*

The Judges resumed work the next day, and twenty Culloden rebels were executed. For years after, the heads of two Irishmen leered down horribly from Micklegate Bar, fixed upon spikes.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTEENTH.

DOCTOR SLOP'S ORIGINAL.

It is wonderful what force, and even bitterness, Mr. Sterne has thrown into this part. Round the creature and his functions he has contrived to cast an atmosphere that repels. Never was there so comic or so odious a figure; we laugh, but at the same time we loathe. In every attitude, in every shape of humiliation—physical (as where he makes his entry after being rolled in the mud of the Yorkshire roads), and moral (where he is contemptuously worsted in argument by a mere corporal without a degree)—in his description and *personnel*, we turn from him with the same repugnance. Even the instruments of that peculiar branch of the profession he followed serve to degrade him yet more.

Yet with all this, it is not likely that Mr. Sterne painted in the figure so mercilessly from any vindictive feeling, growing out of old political broils, when he was henchman to his uncle. His volatile humour was not of the sort that lays up its enmities in strong brine; nor was he one who—as was written so powerfully of another great humourist—"would have gone home, and years

after written a foul epigram about you; watched for you in a sewer, and come out to assail you with a coward's blow and a dirty bludgeon."* The gall and bitterness would have quite evaporated in thirteen or fourteen years. Neither did he so reverence his uncle's memory as to undertake this pious work of retribution. But the truth was that a figure which had been seen before Mr. Sterne's eyes for years, jogging through the length and breadth of his parish with his bag of instruments dangling at his saddle, was irresistible when he came to collect curiosities for his Rabelais cabinet. From time immemorial the medical profession has been a sort of sacred hunting-ground for the brethren; and since the days of Molière, a specially "Cervantic" halo invests the mysterious mechanical aids necessary to the healing-art. For a man, therefore, imbued with the spirit of the old Panurgian classics, such a subject would almost have a fascination; and he would fill in the details with a keen relish, that would sacrifice even truth itself to effect, and a gusto that would have the air of malice. Society, too, was then infested by bands of medical free-lances, unaccredited and uncommissioned, and the horizon was darkened with clouds of quacks. Even in his Sutton sermons he must introduce, really *à propos de bottes*, a diatribe against these dangerous impostors. The hint was given to him; the rude sketch, as upon a wall done with a coal, was there ready to his hand.

* The "English Humourist," p. 7.

It was hard to resist finishing, with bold, free, and dashing strokes and colours, so welcome a subject. The best corroboration of this view is, that Mr. Sterne afterwards publicly repudiated any intention of making a mental likeness; so that it seems likely he merely imported the figure, personal peculiarities, and the profession, and filled in the rest. Doctor Slop was made to belong to the Roman Catholic faith—and readers need not to be reminded how much dramatic effect results from this antagonism of religions through the piece—while Dr. Burton, as has been shown, professed the Protestant religion.

It would seem almost that, on one Sunday, Mr. Sterne took his vendetta into the pulpit with him, and preached at the unlucky mediciner; for, after dealing with the odd subject of "murder," he winds up with a curious denunciation of quack-medicines, brought in by a rather strained *à propos*:—"The loud tongue of ignorance impudently promises much, and the ear of the sick is open. And *as many of the pretenders deal in edgetools*, too many, I fear, perish with the misapplication of them." And again:—"When men without skill, without education, make merchandise of the miserable . . . . every such instance of a person bereft of life *by the hand of ignorance* . . . . is murder in the true sense." Doctor Burton was known to every one of the congregation, and had his quack-medicines; so that, whether intended or not, they

could not but point the allusion.* "Life is short!" bursts out Mr. Shandy, "and the art of healing tedious! and who are we to thank, both for one and the other, but the ignorance of quacks themselves, and the stage-load of chemical nostrums and peripatetic lumber?"

* It might, too, have reference to the "notorious Dr. Hill" (the Holloway of his day), whose "Water Dock" and "Essence of Bardana" were to be seen in the corner of every newspaper.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTEENTH.

SHANDY FAMILY QUARRELS.

In the little memoir written before his death, he assures his daughter Lydia, that he was never a "party-man:" he was of too genial a spirit, and possibly too lazy and irresolute, for the serious labour of violent politics. And then he repudiated the odious function of "writing paragraphs in the newspapers," and adds, indignantly, "I detested such dirty work!" That repudiation cannot be accepted so readily. Very shortly after his death, it was openly stated* that he had been connected with a periodical paper in York "in the Whig interest," a statement never contradicted; and a friend of his mentioned in print, long after, that he knew of his having written party articles in a paper, during the great Yorkshire election. The electioneering note, given not very far back, and signed "Jaques Sterne," has been suspected to be in his handwriting; and even in his sermons breaks out a strong tinge of the political tone of the times. To the dirty work of party he might not condescend, but party-man he was in some sense.

* "Monthly Review," vol. 53.

Allusion has just been made to that quarrel with his uncle: for it is quite in keeping with the mercurial temper of the nephew, not steadied with "one ounce of ballast," that he should quarrel with this redoubtable uncle, who had been and could be of such aid. The cause assigned is "because I would not write paragraphs in the newspapers;" which must be read, "because I would not go on always writing paragraphs." This was one of the failings of "Jaques Sterne, LL.D.;" and it will be recollected, that while the persecuted accoucheur's business was in progress, a discreditable paragraph was sent to London by the Doctor, and was to be read in *Lloyd's Evening Post.* Did the hand that was hereafter to gibbet the luckless Slop strike the first blow in this "party paragraph;" and was the amanuensis who wrote the electioneering note to "Mr. Poultney" equally useful in *Lloyd's Evening Post?* From the way in which it is mentioned, the quarrel would appear to have taken place early. Perhaps Mr. Sterne had done good service for his uncle both in his "party paragraph" direction, as well as in other labour which he did *not* consider "dirty work," and had naturally looked for a fitting recompense, especially during that flux of archdeaconries and preferments; and perhaps the uncle was not inclined to make sufficient exertions for his nephew. It is likely that the breach occurred during the early part of this stage of Mr. Sterne's life, shortly after the Rebellion; and it will be seen that there is fair reason to

fix it at that date. He says that "my uncle and myself were *then* (1741) upon very good terms . . . . but he quarrelled with me afterwards, because," &c. The way in which this is put seems to hint that there was no very great interval between the two dispositions of mind; but he adds presently, "From that period he became my bitterest enemy." Doctor Sterne died early in 1759; so that some space, say of ten or twelve years, must be allowed for the exhibition of this virulent animosity. This would bring it to about the date mentioned.

But, unhappily, there were differences of a domestic nature to inflame this feeling. It will be recollected that when Lieutenant Roger's Regiment was tramping up and down Ireland, it settled for a short space at Londonderry; and during this period of brief repose, the number of their travelling family was increased. This new member was Catherine, who, stronger than the rest, grew up, and was living at Mr. Sterne's decease; but who, he tells his daughter Lydia mysteriously, was "most unhappily estranged from me *by my uncle's wickedness*, and her own folly." The manner in which this is set down shows a certain regret and tenderness for this separation, and points, also, to some violence on the part of "Jaques Sterne, LL.D." Thus, here were all the elements of a savage family animosity—services on both sides, with a sense of ingratitude. What "her own folly" was does not appear now; but it seems curious that Mr. Sterne's two sisters should both have turned out so unfortunate. The

fate of the elder Mary—the "most beautiful woman, of a fine figure," who married "one Weemess," of Dublin—has been described already; and the "folly" of the second Catherine was long after hinted at in a conversation between Horace Walpole and that wax-colour Boswell, Mr. Pinkerton—whom the great letter-writer first gave authority to the cruel calumny in reference to Sterne's treatment of his mother. It afterwards got into circulation, from the half-epigrammatic shape which Byron gave to it; and the happy phrase, "preferred whining over a dead ass to relieving a living mother," was too good to be sacrificed to the homely insipidity of truth. Chatting to Mr. Pinkerton—who was to go home afterwards, and jot down his patron's remarks—Mr. Walpole declared, "I know from indubitable authority that his mother, who kept a school, having run in debt on account of an extravagant daughter, would have rotted in a gaol, if the parents of her scholars had not raised a subscription for her. Her own son," Mr. Walpole epigrammatically goes on, "had too much sentiment to have any feeling. A dead ass was more important to him than a living mother!"*

It will be observed that all that Mr. Walpole heard, "upon indubitable authority," was the fact of a subscription having to be raised by the parents of the scholars; and that Mr. Sterne's behaviour is mere matter of inference. An extravagant daughter plunges her mother into debt; and

* Walpoliana.

because her son, himself dependent on the charity and assistance of his relatives, does not appear to have been the sole agent in helping her out of a serious liability, this unfair antagonism of the "dead ass" and the "living mother" is set afloat, to point an epigram. Because others took part in so benevolent a work, it must not be assumed that her son was wanting. He could do but little, hampered as he was with a family, and his own extravagant tastes, together with the limited emoluments of Yorkshire benefices, would be wholly unequal to the discharge of so heavy a responsibility as the debts of a bankrupt school. It will be seen, then, that even taking Walpole's statement most strongly against Sterne, it does not bear the sense that has been popularly given to it—even artfully inflamed as it is by those words "rot in a gaol," which do not bear at all upon the question. But it is well known that Mr. Walpole did not love the author of "Tristram" too well; and that flourish of "indubitable authority" has been the pretence under which the memory of Laurence Sterne has suffered in but too many instances.

This little glimpse, then, is almost the last of poor Agnes Hebert the widow. After playing the genteel tramp so many years, and such sore buffetings by sea and land, to sink into the weary anxieties of a school; to be wrung at the close of her days by the pressure of debt; to be saved from "rotting in gaol" by the humiliating aid of a subscription; and finally, to be harassed by the ex-

travagance and "folly" of one daughter, and the miserable end of the other, who "died of a broken heart"—it must have been a weary pilgrimage for Lieutenant Roger's widow; and perhaps it was with a sense of relief that she found herself at the gate of that final hostelry where the weary find repose. But we shall see her yet once more, when she shall come to York to obtain counsel and aid from her son.

Happy was it for "Jaques Sterne, LL.D.," that he also passed away seasonably in the early half of 1759—for just then was the nephew at his desk, busy with the two first Shandies, which were to be published within a few months. Room would have been found for him, "my bitterest enemy," in that comic gallery; and a savage but accurate sketch would have come down to us, and taught us more of "Jaques Sterne, LL.D." But although Tristram considers the charitable maxim, "*de mortuis nil nisi bonum*," a nonsensical "lullaby of some nurse, put into Latin by some pedant, to be chanted by some hypocrite to the end of the world;" still, decency and delicacy towards a deceased relative, who had been generous to him, were sufficient to restrain him.

In this place, then, we may finish with turbulent "Jaques Sterne, LL.D." He had outlived the days of civic violence, and no doubt grieved over the little of faction there was left to crush. That spirit had lost heart or died out with Culloden. He was too old for the newer school of

political hostility; otherwise he might have prospered on the rabid anti-Scotch mania that was presently to seize on the town. There was nothing left but to revel in the sweet memories of the august Cumberland's visit to the Precentor's house.

One morning, the Vicar of Sutton reads in *Lloyd's Evening Post,* or in the *London Chronicle,* that his "bitterest enemy" has departed. His end was sung gloriously; and a newspaper herald broke his staff, and proclaimed his titles in a corner of a column.

CHAPTER THE NINETEENTH.

MR. STERNE A WIT.

All this while—and we may take a stretch of some ten or twelve years, the exact order of events being a little indistinct—Laurence is growing in provincial estimation. The squires begin to talk of him—of his wit, his humour, his spirits, his readiness at repartee. He might have sat for that *carte-de-visite* of Voltaire which Mr. Carlyle was to draw over a century later—"The brightest young fellow in the world, well fit to be the Phœbus Apollo of such circles:" beyond question, "the brightest young fellow" in Yorkshire. At the York coffee-houses—especially at that Conservative coffee-house of note, "The George," in Coney Street, or at "Bluit's" in Lendal (which he was partial to afterwards) or at "Howard's"—he was famous company, and ever welcome. There was no discredit in "gentlemen of the gown," according to the quaint phrase then in use, frequenting such places, which, indeed, served as clubs; and in a cathedral city like York, there was sure to be an abundance of "gentlemen of the gown," to whom such a place of meeting, when free from ecclesiastical duty, would

be very welcome. From one of these coffee-houses took flight a retort which, we are told, was the first thing that fairly established his character as a man of wit. It is to be found filling many an old newspaper corner, and enshrined in ancient anecdote repositories.

Entering "The George," we find Mr. Sterne sitting with a large company, chiefly "gentlemen of the gown," listening with deep offence to a smart young fellow scattering his flippancies against the clergy and the whole *personnel* of religion—specially addressing himself to the hypocrisy of ministers. At length, when he has made an end, he turns to our Laurence, and rashly and besottedly asks if he does not agree with him. Possibly he interpreted that Voltairean mouth as being sure to deal with Voltairean matter. With a twinkle of those eyes, and a lifting of the corners of that ace-of-hearts mouth, the young clergyman ignores the question utterly, and begins to describe a particular pointer of his, reckoned the most beautiful in the whole country, but which had one "infer-trick," of always flying at clergymen. Here was warning for the incautious youth—there was mischief at the bottom of this apologue, and he should draw off while there is yet time. But he must put a question—from sheer embarrassment, perhaps: "How long, sir, may he have had that trick?"—"Sir," replies the other (and we see Mr. Sterne taking his first Shandean summersault), "*ever since he was a puppy!*" The witling was

crushed, amid the tumultuous applause of "gentlemen of the gown." The joke was presently all over Yorkshire. People now begin to respect—even to regard with awe—the man who kept such dangerous petards by him, and will be cautious of offence.

Mr. Sterne's local reputation meantime was spreading, and the number of his friends increasing. The new curacy of Stillington—his wife's dower—brought him in contact with a resident family to whom he became sincerely attached. The Crofts were living at Stillington Hall, as they are now at the present day—most friendly people, apparently: for "they showed us every kindness; 'twas most truly agreeable to be within a mile and a half of an amiable family, who were ever cordial friends." The head of the amiable family was then Stephen Croft, Esquire (a young man of about five-and-thirty), who had married "Henrietta, daughter of H. Thompson, of Kirkby Hall, Esquire." Mr. Croft lived almost into the present century, and outlived his friend, reaching to the patriarchal age of seventy-six. To him were affectionately confided, by letter, the earlier triumphs of Mr. Sterne's splendid London campaign.

In his parochial administration, too, he had some little anxieties. Wars were then raging; and England was dispensing that generous but costly philanthropy which nourishes continental wars by the agency of abundant subsidies. Englishmen, too, were being gratified by the spectacle of their monarch

doing his devoir, gallantly enough, at the head of his own troops in a foreign country: were greedily reading the accounts of Dettingen, and listening to Handel's "Te Deum." The disastrous day of Fontenoy, however splendid as a spectacle of valour, brought with it some humiliation, and a further drain on the overstrained resources of the country. The pressure of distress was felt down at Sutton; and in the pulpit of that parish was often dwelt on, and suitably "improved." "God," said Mr. Sterne, one Sunday, "has since tried you with afflictions—you have been visited with a long and expensive war;" and he proceeds to dwell on "all the devastation, bloodshed, and expense," and "the necessary drains of taxes," which so cruel a scourge has entailed on them. But they were presently afflicted with a yet more terrible visitation; and the famous "cattle distemper" started on its fatal progress from Sweden, and journeyed down steadily through Belgium, France, and Germany, and finally crossed into England. It fell chiefly upon the horned cattle, and swept the country from end to end, taking Mr. Sterne's parish in its course. This pestilence, which first showed itself in the year 1744, took the shape of a violent inflammatory fever, arising from wet; and it is alluded to in Mrs. Delany's letters as "a sad distress." In the Sutton pulpit this, too, was dwelt on impressively. "God has sent, moreover," said the preacher, "a pestilence among your cattle, which has cut off the stock from the fold, and left no herd in the stalls." And,

yet, "the pestilence amongst our cattle, though it has distressed and utterly undone so many thousands, what one visible alteration has it made in the course of our lives?"—though, he adds, "one would imagine that the loss of rents and property should, in some measure, have withdrawn the means of gratifying our passions as we have done." *

Meanwhile, amid the universal destitution, there is fruitfulness in Mr. Sterne's own vineyard. Little Lydia the First is wellnigh forgotten, according to the destiny of little strangers prematurely snatched away. But in December, 1747, we find Mr. Sterne again in his vestry, before his Register, making a most important entry:—

"BAPTIZED, 1747.

"December 1st, born and baptized, Lydia, daughter of the Rev. Mr. Sterne, and Elizabeth his wife."

This was little Lydia the Second, who was to run a gay, short, butterfly course, within her father's shadow, and end strangely. We know whence came this fancy for the name of Lydia, by which he baptized two of his children in succession. The sister of Mrs. Sterne was a Lydia: and it is some slight testimony to Mr. Sterne's complaisance that he allowed her to name two children in succession after the relative she loved.

* With questionable taste, young Mr. Dodd—afterwards to be the notorious Dr. Dodd—then at college, turned this scourge into a jest, and published a satire on it—"Diggon Davy's Lament on the Loss of his Last Cow."

CHAPTER THE TWENTIETH.

THE CHARITY SERMON.

It has been mentioned that Mr. Sterne passed much of his time in York—most likely among cheerful "gentlemen of the gown." He was to be found in the "coffee-houses" of the place, which is no discredit to his cloth—those places not having as yet sunk into taverns pure and simple. That queer letter (in macaronic Latin) to Hall Stevenson was scribbled in a York "domo coffeataria." But he was now rising into such reputation, that the Prebendary of the Cathedral and Vicar of Sutton was applied to to preach a charity sermon. This may be said to be Tristram's first appearance on any public occasion, and is worthy of some consideration.

There were two species of "Bluecoat" schools in York—charitable foundations for foundlings or destitute children—something akin to those charity boys and girls, in a quaint party-coloured uniform, whom the stranger sees in the streets of Amsterdam. These were supported by contributions of the charitable, and it was in aid of their funds that the Prebendary of Newbald was applied to to

make an appeal to the faithful. Good Friday, in the year 1747, was the rather strange day selected; and the sermon itself, besides being eminently Shandean, is remarkable as being the first work of Mr. Sterne's that appeared in print. It is also curious, as being the token of his affection he chose to send to one of the earlier objects whom he distinguished with his attentions. The subject was—"The Case of Elijah, and the Widow of Zarephath, considered: A Charity Sermon, preached on Good Friday, April 17, 1747, in the Parish Church of St. Michael-le-Belfrey, before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Sheriffs, at the Annual Collection for the Support of Two Charity Schools."

The text which Mr. Sterne selected—embodying the miracle of the barrel of meal "that wasted not," and the cruise of oil that did not "fail,"—is, of course, familiar to all; and the treatment tolerably sober, with the exception of Cervantic flashes here and there. The true Shandean handling, as applied to sermons, was to break out some years later in the "Assize Sermon." Reasoning on the natural expectance of the widow, that the prophet would recompense her son, he says, naïvely—"Many a parent would build high upon a worse foundation!" When the prophet began to pray over the dead child, that it might be restored to life, he says, quaintly: "*He was, moreover, involved in the success of his prayer himself*"—passages which have quite the old divinity flavour. Then, describing the

scene where the child is restored to life, his taste for painting breaks out, and he pictures for his congregation the various figures of "the piece." "It is a subject one might recommend to the pencil of the greatest genius, and would even afford matter for description here." He hints presently at a very good inducement to Christian charity—viz., that "So quickly sometimes has the wheel of Fortune turned round, that many a man has lived to enjoy the benefit of that charity which his own piety projected." He then dwells upon the old argument for charity drawn from "the pleasure of doing good," and brings in the evidence of that "professed sensualist," Epicurus: and "if it was necessary here, or there was time, to refine upon this doctrine," he "might further maintain" that "the very body of man is never in a better state than when he is most inclined to do good." Further on he pushes this reasoning a little more: "I cannot conceive but that the very *mechanical motions* which maintain life, must be performed with more equal vigour and freedom in that man whom a great and good soul perpetually inclines to show mercy to the miserable;"—a text on which he was to preach more at length, in the very year of his death, in a certain sermon which bore the name of "The Sentimental Journey." Even in those lay homilies which he addressed to Eliza he amplified on the same topic. He then entertains his audience with "an anecdote of Alexander, the Tyrant of Pheres," which "antiquity has pre-

served;" and, drawing the picture of the churlish uncharitable man, brings on "the Great Master of Nature," and the quotation, not so well worn then as now:—

"The man that hath not music in his soul," &c.

—declaiming it, as he had no doubt heard it declaimed upon the York boards.

This sermon he was so pleased with, that he had it printed, with a dedication to the Dean of York (Doctor Osbaldeston, afterwards Bishop of Carlisle), which is very characteristic, and gravely Shandean in tone; embodying a sentiment which will come home to the heart of every professional preacher of charity sermons—"That it, indeed, seems so beaten and common a path, that it is not an easy matter for a new-comer to distinguish himself in it by anything except the novelty of his *vehicle*." It was afterwards put on board with that small cargo of sermons which was towed along so successfully in the wake of the triumphant Shandy barques. And, in a little advertisement, he makes the surprisingly modest confession, that it was "printed some years ago, but *was read by very few*."

It is to be suspected Mr. Sterne was very partial to the stage, and, it is likely enough, availed himself of such theatrical advantages as York offered. In the metropolis he went often without disguise, and knew Garrick by heart. Abroad there was, of course, no "constraint" in reference to his cloth; and he revelled in all manner of dramatic enter-

tainment. No wonder he felt indignant when the ill-mannered Parterre in Paris rose at the unhappy Abbé, whose love for music had taken him to the opera, and who was secreted in one of the upper *loges!* In his Sutton pulpit he scented the foot-lights and orange-peel from afar, and could not decently keep out the metaphorical properties and decorations. "When the whole DRAMA was opened," he said once, in reference to the story of Jacob, "then the wisdom and contrivance of every part of it was displayed." . . . and, again, "How often has the same TRAGEDY been acted upon larger theatres!" —while there is an interpretation of certain passages bearing on Rachel's story, "which altogether excludes this scenical representation I have given of them." "Why should we seek instruction from vanity? Ask the comedian who is taught a part he feels not;"—no doubt an image of that excellent provincial actor Mr. Frodsham, or Mr. Wilkinson, crossing his brain at the moment. It would have been worth a journey out to York to have heard that sermon on Pride, wherein occurs that exquisitely Shandean passage on the folly of this vice:—"To turn giddy upon every little exaltation, is experienced to be no less a mark of a *weak* brain in the figurative than it is in the literal sense of the expression. In sober truth, it is but a scurvy kind of a trick—(*quoties Voluit fortuna jocari*)—when Fortune, in one of her merry moods, takes *a poor devil* with this passion in his head, and mounts him up all at once as high as she can get him: for

it is sure to make him play such fantastic tricks, *as to become the very fool of the comedy;* and was he not a general benefactor to the world in making it merry, I know not how spleen could be pacified *during the representation.*"

How oddly must have sounded that designation "poor devil," drifted from the pulpit down the old aisles of Sutton! No wonder that Gray talked of his being perpetually on the verge of tossing his wig in the face of the congregation!

The York Theatre was flourishing, and was held, like that of Dublin, to be good training-ground for the metropolitan boards. They were, however, a noisy and indecorous audience; and it appears to have been the fashion, in opposition to custom at other places of entertainment, to stand up and put on their hats when the performances commenced. On Shrove-Tuesday, "merely from a savage custom," says one who once was manager,* "the upper gallery were so noisy from numbers, that it would not be conquered but by raising the price on that night." Here it was that Mr. Sterne, before "Tristram" saw the light, must have "assisted" at the representation of "Julius Cæsar:" for, "at the end of the last chapter" of the second book, "my father and my Uncle Toby were left both standing, *like Brutus and Cassius at the close of the scene,* making up their accounts." There is more in this than a mere recollection of his Shakespeare

* Tate Wilkinson.

reading. He had clearly before his mind the figures of the two York protagonists standing (with, perhaps, a provincial awkwardness) at the close of this famous altercation. There is a passage, too, in the sixth "Shandy," which shows a practical familiarity with the "business" of the stage, and is flavoured by a relish to be acquired only at the *coulisses*. "I beg the reader," he says, "will assist me here *to wheel off* my Uncle Toby's ordnance *behind the scenes;* to remove his sentry-box, and *clear the theatre*, if possible, of hornworks and half-moons, and get the rest of his military apparatus out of the way; that done, my dear friend Garrick, we will snuff the candles bright, *sweep the stage with a new broom, draw up the curtain, and exhibit my Uncle Toby dressed for a new character.*" The Reverend Mr. Sterne had clearly often looked out from the green-room upon the flurry and bustle of hurried scene-shifting.

Is it fanciful to suppose that his dramatic experience had helped him to a bare hint of the famous nasal interlude of Slawkenbergius? For just about this time a foolish joke was convulsing pit and galleries, which gradually took the shape of a tradition, and became a standard source of merriment. An unhappy fiddler in Drury Lane orchestra, Cervetti by name, was distinguished by an extravagant length of this feature, and the deformity was at once pounced on as a welcome solace for the unemployed moment of the *entr'acte*. He was saluted with screams of delight, and promptly re-baptized "Nosey;" and the

persecution became so notorious, that Foote alluded to it in one of his prologues.

> Have you not roar'd from pit to upper rows,
> And all the jest was—what? a fiddler's nose;
> Pursue your mirth, each night the joke grows stronger,
> *For as you fret the man his nose looks longer.*

The despondency of Slawkenbergius will be remembered. This may, perhaps, seem a little like refining; but when it is mentioned, that for forty years afterwards it came to be the professional sobriquet for the leader of the orchestra, "*particularly on the York circuit*, where, without compliment, the leader is a man of great professional merit, but *has a nose as much too long* as the manager's is too short,"* it is not very improbable that by this constant repetition the subject was in a manner hinted to Mr. Sterne. No doubt the rich store of "nasal literature," so quaint and singular, must have tempted him to deal in some shape with so congenial a subject, but it seems nearly certain, that the the luckless leader of the York orchestra forced the comic notion more directly on him.

York, meantime, was not losing its attractions. It was the liveliest of English counties. Young Cumberland, hereafter to write entertaining memoirs, and to be "taken up" by noble persons, found his way down there, and found its round of pleasures almost exhausting. Naturally, enough; for the daytime, he tells, was absorbed in hunting,

* Tate Wilkinson, vol. i., p. 24.

and the nights in feasts and balls. Which pleasant fashion of life drifts us on over several years, none of which are marked by any special incident, and leads to Mr. Sterne's second public sermon, preached in 1752, on the occasion of the Assizes at York. This was a more conspicuous occasion for exhibiting his talents.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIRST.

THE ASSIZE SERMON.

The "Hon. Mr. Baron Clive and the Hon. Mr. Baron Smythe" were come to York for the Summer Assizes, and Sunday, July 29th, chanced to fall within the term of their sittings. According to custom, they attended service in state at the Cathedral, and it became the function of the Sheriff's chaplain to preach to them a suitable sermon. With that curious aptitude for advancement, in whatever shape, Mr. Sterne had been appointed to this office, and delivered, "in the Cathedral Church of Saint Peter, York," a piece such as must have confounded, and even amused, the two Judges, as they sat in their pews of state. It was the famous sermon on conscience which Corporal Trim was sent for to the parlour to read out, and which is illustrated with such dramatic remarks and comments. In that shape it was received with rapture, but in its more orthodox dress, and even with the prestige of recent delivery before "the Hon. Mr. Baron Clive and Mr. Baron Smythe," it was but coldly welcomed. It thus made its appearance in no less than three distinct shapes, a pretty certain test of

the opinion its author entertained of its merits. After it had served to entertain Mr. Baron Clive and Mr. Baron Smythe; the High Sheriff, "Sir William Pennyman, Baronet," for the year, and the Grand Jury, also among his listeners, submitted a request that it should be published. "Sir William Pennyman, Baronet's," share in this compliment was a little enfeebled by the fact of Mr. Sterne being his chaplain for the year. In fact, "the request" generally appears to have been at that time almost a thing of course, which it would have been invidious to omit. The dedication to "Sir William Pennyman, Baronet, and to Sir Edward Anderson, Baronet," like every scrap of Mr. Sterne's writing, is really characteristic.* "Gentlemen," he preludises, "I thank you for the great compliment passed on this sermon, by your unanimous request to have it sent to the press, which I have done without sending any apology along with it for its unfitness to appear in public. *Excuses of this kind being generally so well known, both as to substance and form, that it is altogether unnecessary to copy them.* I will, therefore, only beg your favourable acceptance of it; and believe that, though my chief view in complying with your desire was the hope of doing good, contributing something to the interests of religion and morality, yet it is no small pleasure which I receive at the same time for the opportunity it gives me of declaring how great an honour and esteem I have for so many gentlemen of worth and character."

* It need scarcely be mentioned that this tract is exceedingly rare.

Seven or eight years later, when he was getting his Tristram puppets in order, he found this *brochure* in a drawer, and the happy notion occurred to him of preaching it once more, not to assize judges and the legal spirits who fluttered round circuit with them, but to a more humorous congregation, consisting of Dr. Slop, Mr. Shandy, and my Uncle Toby. The church was Shandy Hall, and the parson, Corporal Trim, "who held the sermon loosely, not carelessly, in his left hand, raised something above his stomach, and detached a little from his breast," delivering it with those admirable notes and comments which have made this scene one of the most dramatic in the whole book. The notes and interruptions being thus ingeniously fitted to the sermon (which was written long before), and the sermon itself not being originally intended for such adornments, show how very dramatic in their character were those serious compositions, and how they held in themselves, at a moment's notice as it were, all the elements of Shandean comedy. This "Conscience" sermon has been listened to over and over again by overwhelming congregations, far beyond what the preacher himself could have dreamed of, even on that auspicious day when the "York Circuit" was listening to him in the old Minster. "Can the reader believe," says Yorick, with a pardonable effrontery, that "this sermon of Yorick's was preached at an Assize, in the Cathedral, before *a thousand witnesses*, ready to give oath of it, by a certain Prebendary of that church?" An evidence

of the respectable size of the congregation. Later on, in the body of the composition, he hints at one of those Shandean mystifications in which he delights. For he makes Uncle Toby thus comment on it:—"It is no more at the worst," replied my Uncle Toby, "than the liberty of the pulpit; *for it does not appear that the sermon is printed, or ever likely to be.*"

To this second appearance we owe many delightful strokes of satire. How excellent the touch with which it opens, in reference to that questionable tone with which some divines introduce their text. "For we trust we have a good conscience."—Hebrews xiii. 18. "Trust? trust we have a good conscience!" On which "quoth my father," very happily, "you give that sentence a very improper accent, for *you curl up your nose*, man, and read it with such a sneering tone, *as if the parson was going to abuse the Apostle.*" There are many preachers who, for the moment, have alarmed their congregation by this species of hostile tone, as though they were "going to abuse the Apostle."

Very acceptable, too, are the military comments and professional approbation on the part of Trim and my Uncle Toby. As where the preacher quotes from Ecclesiastes,—"'His mind shall tell him more than seven watchmen that sit above on a tower on high.' (A tower has no strength, quoth my Uncle Toby, unless 'tis flanked.") So, too, when "conscience has got safely entrenched behind the letter of the law, and sits there invulnerable, and well

fortified,"—the two old soldiers exchange looks with each other. "'Ay, ay, Trim,' quoth my Uncle Toby, shaking his head, 'these are but sorry fortifications, Trim.' 'Oh, very poor work,' answered Trim, 'to what your honour and I make of it.'"

Mr. Sterne, too, had regard to the special character of the Hon. Baron Clive and Hon. Baron Smythe, and addresses their conscience in odd figures, drawn from their profession. These certainly, down the choir of the old Minster, must have had an odd, fantastic effect. "Could no such thing," he asks, "as favour and affection enter this sacred COURT? Did WIT disdain to take a bribe in it, or was ashamed to show its face as an advocate? . . . . . Or, lastly, were we assured that INTEREST stood always unconcerned while the cause was hearing; that PASSION never got into the judgment-seat and *pronounced sentence?*" &c. After sketching a few graphic figures, one of whom, perhaps, "was gone out in company with HONOUR to fight a duel, to pay off some debt at play, *or dirty annuity, the bargain of his lust,*" he reminds them that "Conscience all this while was engaged at home, *talking loud against petty larceny.*" Another, when he is near his end, casts up his accounts. "Conscience *looks into* the STATUTES AT LARGE, perceives no *penalty or forfeiture of goods and chattels* incurred." It is securely "fortified with CASES and REPORTS."

This sermon contains what is clearly a local portrait; which seems to be pointed at a certain legal

functionary of the Cathedral—Dr. Topham by name —who was then embroiling the ecclesiastical society of the place in his disputes. Later on it will be shown how he and Mr. Sterne came into collision—and that favourite practice of his, of providing niches for all his friends and enemies, in his comic galleries, quite warrant us in believing that this sketch is taken from life. There is a vitality, too, about it which could not have come from the imagination. A copy from a photograph always betrays itself. "A third, runs this description"—"Is crafty and designing in his nature. View his whole life—'tis nothing but a cunning contexture of dark acts and unequitable subterfuges, basely to defeat all laws, plain dealing, and the safe enjoyment of our several properties. You will see such a one working out a frame of little designs upon the ignorance and perplexities of the poor and needy man—shall raise a fortune upon the inexperience of a youth, or the unsuspecting temper of his friend, who would have trusted him with his life." Dr. Slop is made to call attention to this disagreeable portrait in a very significant way:—"The character of this last man is more detestable than all the rest, *and seems to have been taken from some pettifogging lawyer amongst you.*"

In these times, a mere silent and tranquil loyalty was almost suspicious; therefore, in the presence of Mr. Baron Clive and his learned brother, Mr. Sterne was obliged to make an obstreperous profession of faith. Hence his sermon is disfigured by a clumsy

and awkward tirade against "Popery," singularly out of place in that venerable edifice. But his conclusion is very quaint and happy, and pitched in the true antique key. We are to deduce from this argument, that "whenever a man talks loudly against religion, always suspect that it is not his reason but his passions which have got the better of his CREED. *A bad life and a good belief are disagreeable and troublesome neighbours; were they separate, depend upon it, 'tis for no other cause but quietness' sake.*"

The common, hackneyed phrase, about one's actions "going against one's conscience," means exactly the same "as when he tells you such a thing goes against his stomach—*a present want of appetite being generally the true cause of both.*" Finally, he descends from the pulpit with an ingenious compliment to the two functionaries who had listened to him, reminding his hearers of that conscience within them which is to decide—"not like an Asiatic cadi, according to the ebbs and flows of his own passions, *but like a British judge in this land of liberty and good sense*, who makes no new law, but faithfully declares that law which he knows already written."

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SECOND.

A CATHEDRAL IMBROGLIO.

It has been mentioned that this period of Sterne's life is singularly barren of detail; the dull round of Yorkshire parsonship, as may be imagined, not being very fruitful in incident. Not yet had he stepped upon the boards, and made his bow behind the London footlights.

We have, however, light sufficient to see him figure in one little episode, so quiet and almost prosy that it scarcely rises to the dignity of action, but which may be accepted as a good specimen of his parochial and cathedral life. Most fortunately, a series of some fourteen letters have been preserved—confidential letters written to a valued friend, and which travelled no further than the half-dozen miles or so between Sutton and York. In tone they are purely local, and they deal with little narrow provincial matters; but as an index to the writer's character they are most valuable.* They exhibit him as a good and faithful friend, unspar-

* Mr. Hudson, of York, has favoured me with this important and highly characteristic series of letters, which have never yet been published.

ing of his time and trouble, an adroit and sound adviser, a good man of business, a sympathetic husband, and domestic head of his family. In short, a portrait utterly inconsistent in all its touches with the false sentimental features so familiar to the world. These letters establish him triumphantly as a genial, good-natured, kindly, hard-working Yorkshire parish priest.

One of his fellow Prebendaries in the cathedral was a Mr. John Blake, with whom he was on terms of very close intimacy.* This gentleman had got involved in some matrimonial engagement, either for himself in person, or for some of his family, which seems to have been attended with serious complication and entanglement, and from which he was eager that his friend out at Sutton should extricate him.

Mr. Sterne had been drawn into the confusion of the election in 1758, "which I hate as much as my friend Taylor does,"—Taylor was a York gentleman—and on this account, as well as by reason of "the bad weather, bad roads, not good health," could not get to his friend in York. He therefore sent his "Amen," as he pleasantly called his clerk, to know how the matrimonial venture was advancing, and he sends all kind respects to "Miss C.," who may have been that Miss Catherine Fourmantelle to whom Mr. Sterne was later to become attached. Miss Ash seems to have been the name of

* There was a Mr. Charles Blake, Sub-Dean of the cathedral, whose son most probably this Mr. John Blake was.

Mr. Blake's heroine. Mr. Sterne is anxious to know about the Dean, and to see the York papers; since "we are as much strangers to all that has passed among you, as if we were in a mine in Siberia." At the end he sends his wife's and daughter's regards.

The next time he writes is upon "Munday," and deals with a mysterious *Bristol Express*, which "Monsieur Apothecary will direct as agreed upon between us" (an allusion perhaps to Doctor Slop). He wishes the "postige" of a letter to be paid, "for which I enclose 8*d*., it being a double letter. If Oldfield (the postmaster) should suspect three letters instead of two, you may open it to convince him." Mr. Sterne had borrowed a coat from his friend going out to Sutton a few nights before, which he hoped had reached his friend in all safety, "tho' in what plight, I fear, as it was a rainy night, and ten o'clock at night befor we reach'd Sutton, oweing to vile accidents to which journiers are exposed."

There seems to have been constant expeditions from Sutton into York for dinners, parties, and concerts; and Mrs. Sterne appears to have had her own separate share of entertainment, almost supporting the statement of a friend of Mr. Sterne, that she was a little too fond of amusement.* When Mr. Sterne went out to Newborough to meet Lord Fauconberg, she went too. The next evening she herself was engaged to "the Cowpers," while Mr. Sterne, passionately fond of music, had "set his heart"

* In a communication to the "European Magazine."

upon going to the York concert with his friend Fothergill. This was during a busy week in July, 1758, when his hands were full. "Munday" being given up to "the Land Tax Appeal," and other days being devoted to other engagements, still he could be concerned for his friend's nuptial anxieties. "I see," he writes, "now your affairs approach to such a crisis, that no friendly office can be withheld by one who wishes you so well." He then explains how he is occupied, but will contrive to assist his friend. "However, that day until three both *me* (*sic*) and my rib are at your service to club our understandings all together, and I am sure we shall all be able in four hours to digest a much harder plann, and settle it to yours and our wishes." If more consideration is required, they can meet again; and "if after these preliminaries are settled, I can be of use to you, you know you have no more to do but command me, and I shall be any day the week following," &c. It will be observed how Mrs. Sterne is brought in to "club her understanding" with that of the gentlemen.

These conferences seem to have borne fruit: and, later, Mr. Sterne is glad to hear "some of the rubbish is removed, in order to your edification, which, I hope, will not be long delayed." And then we get a characteristic glimpse of the Sterne conjugal relations. "I tore off," writes Mr. Sterne to Mr. Blake, "the bottom of yours before I let my wife see it, *to save a lye*. However, she has since discovered the curtailment, and seem'd very de-

sirous of knowing what it contain'd—which I conceal, and only say 'twas something that no way concerned *her or me:* so say the same if she interrogates." That little "*to save a lye*" is important testimony to the writer's moral temper; for the person to whom it was written knew Sterne too well to accept such an affectation of scrupulousness if it were not genuine. It was plainly a little secret of Mr. Blake's, which in "no way concerned" Mr. or Mrs. Sterne.

Difficulties being now happily accommodated, Mr. Blake was anxious to see his friend at his house in York; and Mr. Sterne having, through partisanship, or in some other way, incurred the enmity of some of the parties in the affair, writes so practical and sensible an explanation of the motives for declining this proposal, that I have no scruples in giving the letter entire.

"Dear Blake,

"It is not often, if ever, I differ much from you in my judgment of things, therefore you must bear with me now in remonstrating against the impropriety of my coming just at this *crisis*. You have happily now concluded this affair, w^{ch} has been so often upon the eve of breaking off, and my coming would be the most *unseasonable* visit ever paid by mortal man. Consider in what light Mrs. Ash and Miss must have hitherto look't upon me, and should it ever come to light that I had posted over upon this termination of y^{r} differences, I know it

would naturally alarm them, and raise a suspicion I had come over to embroil matters. Things being already settled, 'twould be thought I could have no other errand. But you seem to have a forboding of the same evil by y^r^ desiring me to come *privately*. I have weighed the point w^th^ my wife a full hour, and she thinks we should not stake the disgust y^t^ may possibly be given upon the *chance* of my coming being kept a secret; for if I come to-night I must stay all night, w^ch^ will discover it. If to-morrow morning, both roads and streets will be full, as 'tis Martinmas day, and I declare I would not have my being with you known over the way for fifty pounds. I know you will do me the justice to believe I would run 7 times as far any other road to do you a 7^th^ part of the kindness you ask. But I verily believe, w^ch^, by the by, makes me easy at heart, in my present staying at home, that you will do as well without me. If I can be of service, it must be in case some unforseen objections sh^d^ arise in either party, when you may whistle me to you in a moment's warning. However, my dear friend, if, after all, you think it necessary for you that we should have an hour's talk, I will give up my own judgm^t^ to y^rs^, and come over early to-morrow morning, tho' I rather wish, as does my wife, you would be ruled by us; and depend upon y^r^ own good abilities, w^ch^, I'm sure, are sufficient to carry you thro' now with *safety* and honor. I send my service to no mortal soul—and pray command y^r^ people to say nothing of y^r^ lad's

being here to-day. I wish to God you could some day ride out next week, and breakfast and dine with us, w^ch^, if you do, it would be wise, in my opinion, to make *no secret* of it, but tell the ladies you are going to take a ride to Sutton, to carry the welcome news to y^r^ friends, that every thing was happily concluded. Dear sir, accept our most hearty congratulations upon it, and believe me,

"Y^rs^ most truly,

"LAU^E^. STERNE.

"P.S.—My servant is in town to-night, and will be in town to-morrow, when I will order him to wait upon you. I had collected all your letters, and burn't them before I rec^d^ y^rs^."

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-THIRD.

THE CATHEDRAL IMBROGLIO ARRANGED.

Mr. Blake's affairs, however, seemed to grow yet more disordered. Mr. Sterne was himself "in the crisis of my affairs, namely, the getting down my crop, which is in danger of sprouting," and "all hands were to be employed in cutting my barly," so he could not be absent a moment. Still, Mr. Blake's "distemper" being "full of mystery," and not likely "to end as we all once hoped and wished," another meeting is arranged, at which Mrs. Sterne, who was "engaged to dine at Cowper's the first travelleable day," would be present. In a lively postscript he excuses himself for not sending back some of Mr. Blake's garments. "I beg pardon," he says, "for detaining y^r^ stockings, which was the maid's forgetfullness; but she has a sweetheart in her head, which puts all other things out."

Mr. Blake's birthday was the day on which they were to see him, but it turned out so rainy and "vile," and the roads were so full of water, that after "waiting dressed and ready since nine," they had to give up the expedition. They send

him, however, this rather dismal birthday benediction:—

"Since you left us, we have considered (you know w^{t}) in all its shapes and circumstances, and the more the whole is weighed, the worse and more insiduous appears every step of the managem^{t} of that affair. God direct you in it, 'tis our hearty prayer, for I am, with my wife best respects to you,

"truly yours,

"Comp^{t} to ladies." "L. S.

It was getting on towards Christmas, and Mr. Sterne was very busy getting his "barly" thrashed. "I have four thrashers every day at work, and they *mortify* me with declarations that there is so much barly they cannot get through it before Xmas day; and God knows I have (I hope) near eighty qrs. of oats besides." We have a glimpse too of what a thoroughly business-like man he was.

"I thank God, however, I have settled most of my affairs—let my freehold to a promising tenent—have likewise this week let him the most considerable part of my tyths, and shall clear my hands and head of all county entanglements, having at present only ten p^{ds} a year in land and seven p^{ds} a year in Corn Tyth left undisposed of, w^{ch} shall be quitted with all prudent speed. This will bring me and mine into a narrow compass, and make us, I hope, both rich and happy. 'Tis only to friends we thus

unbosome ourselves, so I know you'l excuse and believe me y^rs

"L. STERNE.

"P.S.—Let me know how your affairs go on, and as distinctly as I have done mine."

Besides these heavy farming operations, he was concerned for his little girl Lydia, who was "somewhat relapsing"—showing symptoms of that asthmatic affection for which he afterwards took her to France. He was waiting on the Dean, "Jack Taylor," and others, and seems to have had his hands full both at home, at Sutton, and when he came into York. At this time too, reappears that poor, tramping Agnes Hebert, his mother, who has come to York—possibly after the Irish school bankruptcy—to meet her son, who has, it may be well conceived, "much to say to her." He was hurrying into York to meet her—this son whom Walpole afterwards was to slander. He was busy even now arranging some of her difficulties, for he writes, "I trust my poor mother's affair is by this time ended, to *our* comfort, and, I trust, hers."

Mr. Blake's "distemper" was, however, not mending, and again Mr. Sterne writes one of his sensible letters, full of sound, thoughtful advice, which may be set out at full length with profit.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"We have ponder'd over the contents of y^rs again and again, and after the coolest and most

candid consideration of every movement throughout this affair, the whole appears, what I but too shrewdly suspected, a contexture of plots agst y^{r} fortune and person, grand mama standing first in the dramatis personée, the Loûp Garóu or raw head and bloody bones to frighten Master Jacky into silence, and make him go to bed with Missy, *supperless* and in peace. Stanhope, the lawyer, —— behind the scenes, ready to be call'd in to do his part, either to frighten or outwit you, in case the terror of grand mama should not do the business without him. Miss's part was to play them off upon y^{r} good nature in their turns, and give proper reports how the plot wrought. But more of this allegory another time. In the meanwhile, our stedfast council and opinion is, to treat wth Stanhope upon no terms either in person or proxy. Consider the case a moment—Your proposals (w^{ch} I trust will be soon offered by you to M^{rs}. Ash in writing) will either be accepted or refused by her at first sight. If they are accepted, he is not wanted to be treated with. If they are rejected, he is the most improper man. The person call'd in such a case sh^{d} be *your friend*, not one who will widen the breach and fortify them in their opiniatre,* but a cordial, kind body who will soften matters and lessen the distance between you. Such a one is not Stanhope, nor could be in honor either as

* This word, used so oddly here, he long after put into La Fleur's mouth—"C'est le cheval le plus opiniatre du monde." No Frenchman would have made such a speech.

their kinsman or council. So I beg leave to repeat it again, keep clear of him by all means, and for this additional reason, namely, that was he call'd in either at first or last, you lose the advantage as well as opportunity of an honor^{ble} retreat w^{ch} is in y^{r} power the moment they reject y^{r} proposals, but will never be so again after you refer to him.

"I am, dear S^{r},

"most truly Y^{rs},

"L. STERNE."

Presently Mrs. Sterne was "taking a wheel" into York to dine with Mr. Bridges, a pleasant friend of her husband's, who was Mr. Sterne's fellow artist in a characteristic caricature, to be described later. "We have 2 gooses for you," writes Mr. Sterne to his cathedral friend; and later, one of the birds by a special messenger. "The bearer," he writes in his delightful genial way, "has brought you one of your gooses, and should have brought myself with it for company, but that I stay and wait till the afternoon to see if my poor girl can be left. She is very much out of all sorts; and our operator here, though a very penetrating man, seems puzzled about her case. If something favorable does not turn out to-day about her case, I will send for Dealtry." Not, it will be seen, for Doctor Burton, who also had a reputation in York as a "penetrating" man.

To Mr. and Mrs. Ash Mrs. Sterne also sent presents of "gooses"— and the letter which accompanies

the gift contains what seems to be the only pun of Mr. Sterne's we are acquainted with. It of course referred to that Mr. Stanhope, the solicitor, whom Mr. Sterne had before painted in as a sort of arch-villain in the piece.

"Saturday.

"DEAR SIR,

"My wife sends you and Mrs. Ash a couple of stubble geese—one for each; she would have sent you a couple, but thinks 'tis better to keep y^r^ other Goose in our Bean Stubble till another week. All we can say in their behalf is, that they are (if not very fat) at least in good health & in perfect *freedome*, for they have never been confined a moment; I wish I could say as much of y^r^ worship—for I fear y^r^ affairs, as heretofore, confine & keep you in the dark, and if I am any conjurer, you are at this hour, just where I left you (if you will allow a pun) STAND HOPEing yourself to death—was there ever so vile a conundrum? Pray God, that may be the worst on't, so believe me to be, what I truly am,

"Y^rs^ cordially,

"L. STERNE.

"P.S. As the goose is for y^r^ mistress, my wife says, you must take the worst and send her the best, & that the next shall be better—turn

"I preach on Sunday at the Cathedral. Will you give me a breakfast, if I get to York early? Or will you be out of town?"

How Mr. Blake's "distemper" was finally cured

we are not enabled to know. There can be no question but that, by Mr. Sterne's skilful counsels, the little difficulty was composed in his favour. It was at best but a small cathedral intrigue—a petty tumult frothing up in the Minster-yard—of tremendous significance to a York audience. In it were the Blakes, Ash's, Taylors—all cathedral men and women—mixed up. But of far more interest is it as a picture of good-natured sympathy and friendly aid—of simple, unobtrusive country life—and of an innocent zeal in the office of friend, father, husband, and pastor.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FOURTH.

A SECOND LOVE.—"DEAR, DEAR KITTY."

In this fashion have the years glided away, until we touch the year 1759—a season that might have been specially valuable to one of so mercurial a temper, but which was hopelessly consumed in the monotony of a dull provincialism. And though this time has been marked by a certain stir and bustle, by local intrigue, and by public dangers and calamities, still Mr. Sterne has not yet begun to live his life. Yet he is now just forty-six years old; and that famous "homunculus," Tristram, not thought of. If there was but some process for shifting and fitting our earlier and fresher years to our later and brighter fortunes!—this must have been a thought which often crossed him in his London racket.

Yet, though Tristram is yet unborn, and not ten people in the kingdom dream of an undiscovered Rabelais down at an obscure Yorkshire parsonage, we may see how many things have been leading imperceptibly up to this special *rôle;* so that it shall presently burst upon the grand world as a surprise. There shall be a few more or less prepared. Politics, pamphleteering, and sermonizing

were no bad training for the more conspicuous exercises.

It was about this time he was often met at the gay watering-place of Scarborough, whose "spaw" was then rising into repute—a place which all through his life he was fond of visiting. Young Mr. Cradock—who was well known behind the scenes of private theatricals, and afterwards, through Goldsmith's good nature, to have his indifferent Epilogue attached to one of his famous comedies—recollected him there. There was a well-known physician of the place—Doctor Thomas—with whom Mr. Cradock used to dine; and at his table he met Mr. Sterne, in such distinguished company as the Duke of York, the Marquis of Granby, Colonel Sloper, and Mr. and Miss Cibber. Mr. Sterne loved rolling his carriage along the beach, with one wheel in the sea.

It was a long time also to stretch back, over those nineteen years, to the day when he stood beside Elizabeth Lumley, in the "cathedral church of St. Peter," and heard the Dean reading the marriage service. It is an interval that would test severely the romantic properties and decorations of wedded life. The polyanthus, and "the friendly wall," together with the "sad and sentimental repasts," and the "sympathising in the dressing-room," by that time must have faded out. The stones of "the friendly wall" had been carted away, and the only memorial of these fanciful ornaments was to be found in the little bundle of old

letters which Mrs. Sterne kept treasured up somewhere.

During these days his life is almost a blank. How much pure "Shandyism" has been lost to us—how many oddities—how many sentimental passions! It was not to be expected that a lively clergyman, full of wit, full of gaiety, whose company was infinitely precious, should escape having his head turned by petting and flatteries. The world knows what a Grand Llama is made of an agreeable cleric, in a rude hunting district, and with what licence he is privileged among the ranks of his fairer devotees. Something of the divinity hedges him about, and from his cloud of spirituality issue forth familiar and even affectionate utterances, welcomed with complacency, but which, coming from those not clothed with the frock, would be justly resented. In the Honeyman of the parish, even where that person is of ordinary qualifications, a more familiar tone both of speech and writing is tolerated.

But where the clergyman is the Rev. Tristram Shandy,—odd, sparkling, vivacious, accomplished, playing on "the bass viol," skilful with his brush, deeply read, and yet no pedant: very comic, very "Cervantic," and very partial to ladies' society in a very gallant age,—he is scarcely to be judged by the ordinary strict standard. His must be a strong head that could withstand the social fascination to which such gifts must expose him. From his pulpit, one Sunday, Mr. Sterne frankly laid bare his own

temper. "Notwithstanding all we meet with in books, in many of which, no doubt, there are a good many handsome things said upon the secrets of retirement; yet, still it is not good for man to be alone. Nor can all which the cold-hearted pedant stuns our ears with upon the subject, ever give one answer of satisfaction to the mind; in the midst of the loudest flauntings of philosophy, nature will have her yearnings for society. A good heart wants some object to be kind to, &c. Let me be wise and religious, but let me be MAN!" Others "may seek heaven comfortless and alone, *for my own part I fear I should never so find the way.*"

Nor was there precedent wanting. The great Irish dean, so terrible in love and political war, had been laid in St. Patrick's but a few years, and the world had not yet done sympathising with the hapless Vanessa, who had been beaten by the other lady in the struggle for the great dean's heart. Whitefield, and his extravagances of spiritual affection, were now abroad, and the tendency to clergyman worship very strong. That precedent of Swift, as well as that of Scarron and Waller, it is clear were before Mr. Sterne's eyes, for in the famous "Draper Letters" he alludes to them very plainly.

Setting aside any exemplary observance of the special duties of his profession, which in his age were not popularly expected, the whole current of Mr. Sterne's life and manners was tinged by sentiment. Here is his amatory profession of faith. "*I myself must ever have some Dulcinea in my head:*

it harmonises the soul." He was indeed a sentimentalist by constitution; not the affected, whining, "snivelling" mountebank, he has been so unjustly painted, in tone and temper, and which circumstances and the accidents of society combined to develop to a less excusable degree. "*I must ever have some Dulcinea in my head,*" he said; with this text before us, we must read the curious roll of Mr. Sterne's Platonic amours. "Softer visions, gentler vibrations," shall now visit him; he shall now take up "the lute, sweet instrument! of all others the most delicate—the most difficult! how wilt thou touch it, my dear Uncle Toby?" And yet how much more "delicate" and "difficult" to deal with here! which is yet a task most necessary in a life of Sterne, to be now attempted in all sincerity, and with perfect candour.

At "Mrs. Joliff's, in Stonegate," only a few streets from the mansion of Mr. Richard Sterne, was now residing a young French lady with her mother. They belonged to a Huguenot family, who had been forced to leave France on account of their religious opinions, and had found their way to York. The young French lady bore the melodious name of "Miss Catherine de Fourmantelle," and seems to have been possessed of much personal attraction.*

The family itself was called "Beranger de Fourmantelle," and once held estates in St. Domingo,

* The details of this little episode are derived from the curious letters printed by the Philobiblon Society, and edited by Mr. Murray.

which, under the strict religious tests of the period, became forfeited. An elder sister, however, could not resist this bait; and conforming to the established faith of the country, was permitted to return and enjoy the family possessions. Miss Fourmantelle and her mother remained in York, where she was to become the centre figure in one of Mr. Sterne's many Arcadias. And, indeed, in this young person were to be found, *à priori*, as it were, some fitting elements of sentimentalism—a proscribed devotee, suffering persecution, a melodious name, and that sparkle of foreign extraction and foreign accent.

With this young person Mr. Sterne became affected sentimentally, after his own peculiar fashion, which appears to have been in this wise: —"Whenever it falls out," he writes of himself, "that an earthly goddess is so much this, and that, and t'other, that I cannot eat my breakfast for her, and that she careth not three-halfpence whether I eat my breakfast or no. Curse on her; and so I send her to *Tartary*, and from *Tartary* to *Terra del Fuego*, &c. But as the heart is tender, and the passions in those tides ebb and flow ten times in a minute, I instantly bring her back again." And so through all manner of extremes most comically expressed. Until at last:—"By all that is hirsute!—I cry, taking off my furred cap, and twisting it round my finger, I would not give sixpence for a dozen such."

We may hearken yet again to his profession of

faith, made in the congenial atmosphere of the "Sentimental Journey:"—"God bless them all," he said to the Count de Bissie; "there is not a man upon earth who loves them so much as I do. After all the foibles I have seen, and all the satires I have read against them, still I love them, being firmly persuaded, that a man who has not a sort of affection for the whole sex, is incapable of ever loving a single one as he ought." This candid declaration he afterwards supplements by another:—Owing to "having been in love with one princess or another almost all my life, and I hope I shall go on so till I die, being firmly persuaded, that if ever I do a mean action, it must be in some interval between one passion and another." A theory half chivalric, and which the old Bayards of crusading times made to influence their conduct.

To Miss Fourmantelle Mr. Sterne wrote ardent letters, addressing them to "Dear, dear Kitty." Which documents that lady put by faithfully, and cherished as Mrs. Sterne had put by *her* treasures, by this time sad fossils enough. By-and-by they passed into the hands of "Mrs. Weston," her friend, who judiciously indorsed upon them a false and calumnious little history of the conclusion of the adventure. Most of them are scarcely more than flying scraps, indited in Mr. Sterne's chronic hurry. Most are without date, and one actually fitted with a wrong date, whose error is apparent from the context, and all are distinguished by some curious mistakes in spelling. This blemish, in

spite of all his accomplishments, waited on Mr. Sterne through all his life—even to the last page of the "Sentimental Journey;" the original manuscript of which betrays some curious slips both in the French and English tongues.

Contemporaneously with this attachment—which, it may be presumed, like all Mr. Sterne's *grandes passions*, "was the tenderest ever human wight was smitten with"—Mr. Sterne was busy with the first portion of famous "TRISTRAM SHANDY;" and there can be no question but that by this accident "Dear, dear Kitty" has received a certain immortality, from being niched into the eighteenth chapter, under the thin disguise of "My dear, dear Jenny." She is there introduced prettily enough, and dramatically, in a short sketch of two or three lines, which reminds us of a scene in the "Sentimental Journey." He has been dwelling on a bit of philosophy; that is, "when we cannot get at the very thing we wish," never to put up with "the next best in degree," and has added, "now this I like."—"It is no more than a week from this very day—which is March 9, 1759—that my dear, dear Jenny—observing I looked a little grave, as she stood cheapening a silk of five-and-twenty shillings a yard—told the mercer she was sorry she had given him so much trouble, and immediately went and bought herself a yard-wide stuff of ten pence a yard." Mr. Sterne was a little too fond of standing in shops, both in Paris and elsewhere, philosophising over the counter with young and pretty ladies; yet

even in this dim sketch there is a hint of grave paternal relations on the one side, and something nearer to reverence on the other: features which do someway break out in all Mr. Sterne's attachments.

He seems even to deprecate the construction which York scandal may put on such connections: "Nor is there anything unnatural or extravagant in the supposition that my dear Jenny may be my friend—friend!—my friend. Surely, madam, a friendship between the two sexes may subsist, and be supported without," &c. Long after, when "dear, dear Kitty" had been succeeded by a whole series of Dulcineas, he recurs to the name again, with a sort of fond recollection, and addresses to "dear Jenny" a mournful meditation on death, then within a stride of but a few months from him.

With this young lady Mr. Sterne got through some of his heavy York hours, drinking dishes of tea, shopping, sketching, and sending presents of wine. "Miss" begins the first of these letters, written on a Sunday.* "I shall be out of all humour with you, and besides *will not paint your picture in black, which best becomes you,*" unless "a few bottles of Calcavalla" are accepted, which his man will "leave at the *dore*." He will explain the reasons of this "trifling present" on Tuesday night, when "I shall insist upon it that you invent some plausible excuse to be at home." This is signed,

* Two or three of these letters had been seen and printed by the elder Disraeli.

"Yours, YORICK." "Tristram" was not published, as yet: and from this allusion, as well as from the way in which Parson Yorick makes his *début* at the very threshold of the book, it is likely that it was a sort of pet name by which he was known among his friends.

After one Saturday night at "Mrs. Joliff's in Stonegate," with Mrs. Fourmantelle and her daughter, when they had stayed up very late, no doubt busy with the "bass viol," Mr. Sterne writes the following Sunday morning to tell her that "if this billet catches you in bed, you are a lazy, sleepy little slut" (Mr. Sterne used to call his daughter Lydia "an accomplished little slut"); and proposes to see her at a Mr. Taylor's—the Mr. Taylor that figured in the Blake embarrassments—at "half an hour after twelve;" and he has ordered his man Matthew "to steal her a quart of honey." For the strain of rapture in which portions of this correspondence are couched, it would be unbecoming to offer a word of excuse. They go beyond any indulgence which may be allowed to professed sentimentality. "What is honey to the sweetness of thee who are sweeter than all the flowers it comes from?" "I love you to distraction, Kitty, and will love you to eternity," with more to the same effect; and yet I am inclined to believe that this passion, as it must be called, did not travel beyond the bounds of these raptures. For there is a curious expression in one of these letters, which shows that he intended marrying this young girl, in case of his wife's death. "I have *but*

one obstacle," he wrote, "to my happiness, and what that is you know as well as I." Again, he appeals to a higher power—"God will open a door, when we shall some time be much more together." And again: "I *pray* to God that you may so live and so love me as one day to share in my great good fortune." It can scarcely be supposed he would be guilty of the gross profanity of these solemn appeals and allusions, if there was anything in the intimacy of the character that has been insinuated. There is a delicacy and disagreeable duty in weighing questions of this nature, and it were best to leave the question with the reader. Anyone who recklessly puts himself in so suspicious a situation—however pure his motives—cannot complain if posterity naturally judges him by the presumption of ordinary evidence. But for the feeling which could prompt him to calculate on the death of his wife, and already settle on her successor, nothing is to be said. And, curious to say, long after he was making a similar arrangement with the more famous Eliza Draper.

Possibly, this may have been his mere amatory stock-in-trade; part of that armoury of insinuation with which he practised on the hearts of ladies; and by habitual usage his moral sense may have grown dead to the utter impropriety of such conduct.*

On the Thursday following arrived the pot of

* In dealing with this, and with other similar passages of Mr. Sterne's life, it will not be supposed that anything like wholesale advocacy has been attempted. The view taken has been merely to deal with the evidence *as* evidence, and give him the advantage that is allowed to every person upon trial, of any doubtfulness that may appear.

honey and the pot of sweetmeats, with a dainty letter, quite in keeping, and which reads as quaintly as though it came from an Elizabethan lover:—

"My dear Kitty—I have sent you a pot of sweetmeats and a pot of honey, neither of them half so sweet as yourself; but don't be vain upon this, or presume to grow sour upon this character of sweetness I give you; for if you do, I shall send you a pot of pickles (by way of contrarys) to sweeten you up and bring you to yourself again. Whatever changes happen to you, believe me that I am unalterably yours, and according to your motto, such a one, my dear Kitty—

'Qui ne changera pas que en mourant.'

"L. S."

In Miss Fourmantelle's motto the "que" and "en" would have stood "qu'en," but Mr. Sterne's French was never one of his strong accomplishments. Of whose making was that pot of sweetmeats? Could it have been of that much-enduring unromantic lady out at Sutton, within whose province such functions came with a special appropriateness—a species of chronicling small beer? But she has had her day, as "dear, dear Kitty" will have hers.

"Qui ne changera pas que en mourant!" This from the Reverend Mr. Yorick! Well may the cynic smile who has seen the long train of Mr. Sterne's "flames," in respect of whom he was "to

change only in death." "My witty widow," "Lady Percy," "Mrs. H.," "Maria of Moulines," "Mrs. Elizabeth Draper, wife of Daniel Draper, Esquire," the "Toulouse" lady, and the whole company of grisettes, which reads like the perfect "mille e tre" of Leporello's list; for all of whom he was, "to change only in death." Precisely such a motto did a certain French Delia send to her wavering Damon, with, besides, the pretty device of a leaf engraved upon a seal; and to her did the pitiless lover (he was a Frenchman) send back a neatly engraved device of a *chemise d'homme* with the motto "*j'en change tous les jours.*"

Presently Mr. Sterne is sending, not a "pot of sweetmeats," but a more serious gift, "the enclosed sermon," which proved to be his Good Friday charity sermon on Elijah, of which he had, no doubt, some copies in his desk. He sends it because "there is a beautiful character in it of a tender and compassionate mind in the picture given by Elijah. Read it, my dear Kitty, and believe me when I assure you, that I see something of the same kind and gentle disposition in your heart which I have painted in the prophet's." He had the "pleasure to drink your health last night, and, if possible, will see you this afternoon before I go to Mr. Fothirgill's" (Mr. Fothirgill was one of the ecclesiastical society—a prebendary, and a relation of the famous Doctor Fothirgill's). He is, in conclusion, her "affectionate and faithful servant, LAURENCE STERNE." From this more formal signature, as well as from

its more subdued tone, and the reference to the Elijah sermon, this letter would seem to belong to the earlier days of their acquaintance.

We must now lose sight of "Dear, dear Kitty" for a short time; Mr. Sterne being busy with far more important matters—in fact, laying the foundation for his fame. Miss Fourmantelle shall appear again presently, when Mr. Sterne's letters to her become of far more value than mere rhapsodical effusions, being written from London in the first jubilee of his whirl of triumph.

What was the ultimate destiny of "Dear, dear Kitty" is not known; but Mrs. Weston, the friend before alluded to, actually took the trouble to indorse upon the bundle of letters a strange and ghastly bit of romance—quite apocryphal—which is only worthy of notice for the purpose of showing what a curious confederacy there has been to vilify the memory of the great humorist in every possible way. This precious bit of history sets out how Mr. Sterne paid his addresses to her for five years, then suddenly deserted her, and married Mrs. Sterne. That by this cruelty she lost her wits, and was taken over to Paris by her eldest sister to be placed in a mad-house, in which gloomy place of confinement she died. Mr. Sterne, however, during some of his pleasant visits to Paris, contrived to see her; and with a practical eye utilised all the sentiment in the situation, working it up effectively in that well-known "bit," "Maria of Moulines."

A reference to a single date disposes of this clumsy

"sensation" scene. Mr. Sterne was married in 1740; and we find Miss Fourmantelle, in all her charms, intimate with him twenty years afterwards, viz., in 1760. No one has suffered so much from these cruel fabrications as Mr. Sterne. Think only of a "Mrs. Weston" being at the pains to put by this secret record for some mysterious purpose—a piece of vulgar York scandal, quite in keeping, as to its truth and consistency, with the other vile stories for which he has been made the mark. These were some of the weapons which Eugenius warned him "Revenge and Slander, twin-ruffians," were to level at his reputation.

It is to be suspected that the same free speech which raised him up enemies in his parish, made him unpopular in the cathedral coteries. Long after, he wrote to his daughter in York, to give his love to Mr. Fothirgill, and to the few friends that envy had spared him. And in his books he has half-sarcastic allusions at the personages who are preceded by the men with the silver rods. He has a thrust at what he called "Waterlandish knowledge,"—the hero of which had been chancellor of his cathedral. Phutatorius, and Didius, and Gastripheres—and the "commissaries, officials, advocates, proctors, registers"—who dined together—were all attached to the cathedral; and the official whom he called Gastripheres could not have been complimented by that unpleasant allusion to personal obesity. The "learned Bevoriskius," who is ridiculed in the "Sentimental Journey," must, I

think, be a disguise for Eboriskius, and have reference to some one in the cathedral of York.

This did not help him to friends. But when this great body of "canons, registers, civilians, &c.," were distracted by internal division, and he chose a side to which he brought the powerful assistance of his tongue and pen, the feeling towards him must have been embittered. Such an intestine feud did actually break out in the society, which, though of a contemptible character, deserves historical notice, as being the occasion of the first bit of Shandyism that proceeded from Mr. Sterne.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIFTH.

"THE GOOD WARM WATCH-COAT."

Among the officials was a certain Doctor Topham, a lawyer, who enjoyed great local practice, and left a large fortune behind him. A fortune which his son seems to have squandered in town, in curious practices, and unbounded prodigality. This son was sent to Cambridge—was the friend of "Devil Montagu" — was put into the Horse Guards—had a place in the country called Cowslip Hall, and drove a curricle with four black horses.* He is better known, perhaps, as the biographer of Elwes, the miser, but always took most pleasure in the thought that he had furnished the occasion of Mr. Sterne's first taking up his pen. For it was this son of Doctor Topham's that brought about a tremendous controversy in the cathedral society.

That dignitary, in addition to many others, had secured a patent place for himself, and, not content with this advantage, intrigued to have the reversion of it secured to this gay son. The Dean, in whose gift it was, seems to have resisted this pressure, and the result was a noisy

* Frederick Reynolds' Memoirs.

cathedral squable, fought with all the weapons of verbal recrimination and pamphlets. And as Mr. Sterne wrote on one side, it may be worth while going a little more minutely into details. For, besides being characteristic of the times, it was, no doubt, what first suggested to Mr. Sterne that he could use his pen with skill.

This little scandal broke out in the year 1758, but its origin dated much further back, to a promise given by Archbishop Herring to Doctor Topham, whom Mr. Sterne describes as a "little, dirty, jumping, pettifogging, ambidextrous fellow, who neither cared what he did or said of anyone, provided he could get a penny by it." He seems also to have been a greedy pluralist, uniting in his single person this wonderful combination of offices: "Master of the Faculties," "Commissary to the Archbishop of York," "Official to the Archdeacon of York," "Official to the Archdeacon of the East Riding," "Official to the Archdeacon of Cleveland," "Official to the peculiar jurisdiction of Howdenshire," "Official to the Precentor," "Official to the Chancellor of the Church of York," and "Official to several of the Prebendaries thereof." Yet this rapacious civilian was not satisfied, but eager for yet another office, which brought on the dispute in question.

Mr. Sterne in his time saw a whole line of archbishops pass by—an unlucky and too rapid succession, which for a rising young ecclesiastic was truly discouraging. The work was all but done,

when by some perverse departure, he had to begin again. Thus Archbishop Blackburne reigned until 1743; Archbishop Herring, who came from Bangor, ruled but four years, until 1747; and Archbishop Hutton, who came also from Bangor, reigned ten years. Salisbury then supplied Archbishop Gibert, who ruled but four years, until 1761; when Archbishop Hay Drummond succeeded, supplied again by Salisbury; and while he yet wore the mitre, Mr. Sterne passed away. It is with archbishops, as with ministers; a too rapid succession is fatal to the anxious labours of the political or ecclesiastical agriculturist. He has not time to sow; or the crop is in the ground, and he is not allowed to reap. This was one of Mr. Sterne's stumbling-blocks in his profession.

Doctor Hutton had but just ascended the throne episcopal, and was new to his sovereignty, and to its thorns and torments, when the pluralist, Doctor Topham, began to be very assiduous in his attentions to the fountain of honour. "He had run for eggs," says Mr. Sterne, telling the story satirically, "in the town upon all occasions, whetted the knives at all hours, catched his horse, and rubbed him down; that for his wife, she had been ready on all occasions to char for them, and neither he nor she, to best of his remembrance, ever took a farthing, or anything beyond a mug of ale. He had drunk his reverence's health a thousand times (by-the-by, he did not add out of the parson's own ale), &c." The foundation for this pleasant exaggeration, was in a

pamphlet of Doctor Topham's, in which he laid his grievances before the York public. "Long before anything of the patent was thought of, *I not only most sincerely lamented the Archbishop's illness*, but made it my business to inquire after every place and remedy that might help his Grace in his complaint." The object of these assiduities soon became evident. Doctor Topham was anxious that one of his numerous offices should be his, not merely for his life, but should be entailed upon one of his family. *Trim* is the name Mr. Sterne gives to this outrageous petitioner—a name which seems to have pleased his fancy, as he afterwards confers it on a being of a very different mould, and the direct opposite of Doctor Topham in all the unselfish virtues.* "The Patent Place" was described under the figure of an old Watch-Coat, that had hung up many years in the church, "and nothing would serve *Trim*, but that he must take it home, in order to have it converted into a *warm under-petticoat* for his *wife*, and a *jerkin* for himself." The Archbishop, who appears to have been an easy and compassionate man, wearied out by importunity, gave the promise required. Later on, however, he finds that he has been a little hasty, and that the Patent Place, or *Warm Watch-Coat*, was by the terms of its endowment to be strictly for the benefit of some one connected with the

* It will thus be seen that there was a Trim before the immortal Corporal. It has been already mentioned that the name is amongst Shadwell's *dramatis personæ*.

Cathedral: say, "to the sole use and behoof of the poor sextons, and their successors for ever, to be worn by them respectively in winterly cold nights." Doctor Hutton then finding he had promised more than was in his power, sends for Dean Fountayne, and in his presence explains to "*Trim*" how impossible it was for him to comply with his wishes. The eager pluralist lost his temper, "huffed and bounced most terribly, swore he would get a warrant . . . but cooling of that, and fearing the Parson" (who is put for the Archbishop) "might possibly bind him over to his good behaviour, and, for aught he knew, might send him to the House of Correction—he lets the Parson alone, and to revenge himself falls foul upon the Clerk," *i.e.* the Dean. This minor embroilment sets on foot the clerical scandal, and the York society is delighted by an indecent wrangle between the Dean of their Cathedral and this Official of many Offices.

Dean Osbaldiston was the dignitary who had heaped "many favours and civilities" upon Mr. Sterne, which are acknowledged in the dedication to that Charity Sermon preached in the year 1747. But, perversely enough, the shifting destiny which removes archbishops, acts with equal impartiality upon deans; and in that same year of the dedication—which handsome acknowledgment should later have brought in proper fruit—the "Very Reverend Richard Osbaldiston, D.D., Dean of York," is translated far away from York, to a distant bishopric. To him succeeded Doctor Fountayne,

on whose side Mr. Sterne was now doing battle. From this dignitary, the persevering Topham gave out that he had obtained a promise of a place, which bore the title of "The Commissaryship of Pickering and Pocklington," and whose value was five guineas per annum, and which Mr. Sterne in his satire prefigures under the title of the "Breeches." The Dean publicly denied having made such a promise; and it was said that an unpleasant altercation took place at the public "Sessions Dinner," between the two. Great scandal was the result; the Cathedral was divided; charges of falsehood and want of faith were exchanged, and both, appealing to a larger public, took the field with pamphlets.

"A letter addressed to the Rev. the Dean of York, in which is given a full detail of some very extraordinary behaviour of his in relation to his denial of a promise made by him to Dr. Topham," was the singular title of the first pamphlet in this clerical duel. Doctor Topham charges the Dean with a promise—the broadest and most comprehensive in its benevolence that can be conceived—"that I might rely on receiving from you in my profession every act of friendship it was in your power to show me;" and further, that this purpose of general philanthropy was made more practical and special by a second promise to the effect that "in a private conversation you assured me that I might rely on receiving from you the patent in your own gift, and your vote and interest as to the patent

in the gift of the Dean and Chapter." Dean Fountayne then published "a Reply," in which it is not improbable that Mr. Sterne had some share. This is very likely from his spirit of partizanship—his friendship with the Dean, and, above all, from an insinuation of Doctor Topham's, given with some complacency by Mr. Sterne, that the "answer was the child and offspring of many parents." The Dean had fortunately kept some old letters by him, which do appear to clear him from the imputation of having violated his promise, and these he published. Presently, a third quarrel broke out between the Dean and the Archbishop, which, as may be conceived, raised much more heat and dust. The affair was about some point of ecclesiastical discipline, which is hidden away under the figure of raising or lowering the desk in the Cathedral. "The Archbishop," said Mr. Sterne, "might have his virtues, but the leading part of his character was not *humility*," and with this Prelate the disappointed Commissary took part. Fortified by such protection, he one day snapped his fingers at the Dean, and affected to despise his promised gift of "the Commissaryship of Pickering and Pocklington." The powerful patronage he had just secured by embracing the Archiepiscopal side, "became Trim's Harvest." This affair of the "Parson's Desk" took a serious complexion. The Archbishop told the Dean "one day after prayers, he could be at it no longer—he would have it altered, and brought down as it should be." To him, the Dean with

"stiffness" made answer, "that the desk was not of his raising . . . that 'twas not one hair's breadth higher than he found it, so he would leave it."

After this contemptuous rejection of the "five guinea" emoluments of "Pickering and Pocklington" —the Dean, in Mr. Sterne's version of the case— asked if he would have any objection to let "*Mark Slender*" have the office: that is to say, Doctor Braithwaite—who, it will be recollected, was one of Doctor Burton's persecutors. An appeal was made to his pity. The breeches would scarcely fit *Trim*, "who was now, by foul feeding and playing the good fellow at the Parson's, growing somewhat gross about the lower parts." But the fact was, the pluralist expected better things: "the great green pulpit cloth and old velvet cushion," which would have "made up the loss of the breeches seven-fold." This was the "Commissaryship of Dean of York, and Commissaryship of Dean and Chapter of York." The Cathedral seemed to abound in these curious little offices. "*Mark Slender*," or Doctor Braithwaite, did not live very long to enjoy the profits of his office; and then "they got into the possession of *Lorry Slim*, an unlucky wight, by whom they are still worn—in truth, as you will guess, they are very thin by this time." There is no difficulty in identifying "*Lorry Slim*;" and this insignificant bit of preferment which made such a hubbub, shows that he was of consideration with the higher powers, and a person of importance in the

Cathedral battles.* This special quarrel, too, shows us a glimpse of his character drawn by Yorick himself, and which may be added to the personal sketch given in "Tristram." "But Lorry has a light heart, and what recommends them to him is this, that thin as they are, he knows that *Trim*, let him say what he will, still envies the possessor of them, and, with all his pride, would be very glad to wear them after *him*." Still the unlucky Topham seems to have gotten upon a groove of ill-luck, for when the "pulpit cloth" and "cushion" were presently taken down, they were given away, not to him, but to one "*William Doe*," that is, to Mr. Stables,† who understood very well what use to "make of them." It may be conceived what a

* So far back as the 29th of December, 1750, Mr. Sterne had been sworn in as "Commissary of the Peculiar Court of Alne and Tottesston" (an office of the same class as the one then in dispute), and appointed his surrogates. The duties appear to have been confined to the issuing of marriage licenses, &c., and the emoluments were very insignificant. Thus, from the 18th of June, 1765, to the 25th of October, 1766, Mr. Sterne received but £2 1*s.* 4*d.* (His registrar, Mr. Mackley, has an entry in December, "Paid Mr. Sterne, thus far, £2 1*s.* 4*d.*") And during seven months of the year in which Mr. Sterne died, the returns reached but to 5*s.* 4*d.* Mr. Sterne, however, made his annual "Visitation of the Clergy and Churchwardens of the Parishes of Alne, Wigginton, and Skelton," with great regularity. The following are the dates :—

10th June, 1751.	28th July, 1755.
6th July, 1752.	5th July, 1756.
28th May, 1753.	25th July, 1757.
1st July, 1754.	30th May, 1758.

After this year he became irregular, and left the duty to his surrogate. Mr. Sutton, the Deputy Registrar, has the original book with these entries, which he has kindly allowed me to use.

† In another account this "William Doe" is put for a Dr. Birdmore.

soreness and ferment of parties this contention for places and disappointment brought about among the holy men of the Cathedral.

When it came to the "Session's Dinner" squabble—which was at Mr. Woodhouse's—and the pamphlets were fluttering in the air, Mr. Sterne rushed to the assistance of his friend, Dean Fountayne, and, sitting down, wrote his first Shandean Essay. It is very pleasantly done, and though a little ponderous in portions of the allegory, is in his smartest manner; but some of the strokes are unquestionably too grossly personal.

A remark which Mr. Sterne puts into his own mouth in this satire, will be a good illustration—an insinuation scarcely fair, and exceeding the bounds of decorous discussion. It is a key to the spirit with which all the disputes, party or otherwise, were carried on in this city of York. "Ay," says the luckless wight above-mentioned (who was standing close by him with the plush breeches on) "you are not only mole-catcher *Trim*, but you catch STRAY CONIES too in the dark, and you pretend a license for it, which, I trow, will be looked into at the next quarter sessions. I maintain it, I have a license, says Trim, blushing as red as scarlet,—I have a license, and as I farm a warren in the next parish, I will catch conies every hour in the night. *You catch conies!* says a toothless old woman just passing by." This gives a glimpse of the manner of Mr. Sterne's jesting, or kind of rough, rude, Yorkshire bantering, which must have fallen with much seve-

rity on those who were not his friends, and have been welcomed racily by such as were his friends. No doubt this little petard was shown about as was the first portion of "Tristram." It was about being printed when the commissary grew alarmed. The dispute was accommodated, and the satire laid by in Mr. Sterne's desk.

The little ferment is itself not without interest, and is more valuable as a little photograph of the old cathedral life than even a chapter of Barchester Towers; but more significant still is it as a solution of the secret of that persecution of which Yorick bewailed himself as being the victim. If Mr. Sterne suffered, that smart tongue and ready pen were in part accountable.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SIXTH.

"TRISTRAM" WRITTEN AND PUBLISHED.

Concurrently with these pursuits—amatory and political—the parson of Sutton was busy with what he, no doubt, then considered a snatch of pure trifling; but which was to bear him more fruit than infinite turns of the obscure wheel of Yorkshire politics. He was scribbling away at "Tristram Shandy;" and, unconsciously to himself, had actually one foot on the steps leading up to the niche over which was written "The English Rabelais." That name came from high ecclesiastical authority, and was written over it by the Bench of Bishops.

He was now busy with a more ambitious attempt —a strange, rambling novel, based upon some of those quaint rococo models with which his mind was stored; by which, too, his local reputation as the brilliant Parson Sterne might be increased, by introduction of local allusions, and characters thinly veiled. We may be sure he never dreamt of the splendid prize he was to draw in the literary lottery.

It seems probable that the work was begun about the month of January, in the year 1759, and that

the two first volumes of "Tristram" took about six months to write and print. He has himself let fall a hint or two which helps us roughly to estimate his rate of progress.

"Candide," Voltaire's famous romance, had appeared in the January or February of that year, and Mr. Sterne had barely written a few chapters when he broke into an address to Fame begging of her, "if not too busy with Miss Cunegunde's affairs," to look down upon Tristram. And at the seventy-seventh page of his first volume he makes a remark on the "irregularity" of national temper; which he says was "struck out" at the very moment he was holding the pen, viz., "On this very rainy day, March 26, 1759, between nine and ten in the morning." Some thirty pages further back he again marks the time at which he was writing—"This very day in which I am now writing this book for the edification of the world," which is March 9, 1759 (a week after the time that "dear, dear Jenny" and he stood "cheapening a silk"). Going backwards in a rough fashion, according to this scale, January would be about the date he began his first chapter.

His fashion of scribbling must have been quite in character and truly Shandean. He owns to wearing a special fur cap, and had a fancy for a cane chair with nobs at the top. He usually wrote very fast, so that literally his pen guided him, not he his pen; and his way of writing was of that irregular, spasmodic, disorderly, and even uncleanly

sort, which has been peculiar to all famous eccentrics; "with rash jerks and hair-brained squirts," "dropping thy pen, spurting thy ink about thy table and thy books, as if thy pen, thy books, and thy furniture cost thee nothing." Mrs. Sterne must have marvelled to see him at his work. His own sketch of himself is quite a portrait. "I wish," he says, "you saw me half starting out of my chair; with what confidence, as I grasp the elbow of it, I look up, catching the idea, even sometimes before it half-way reaches me." Any one who looks at the Reynolds picture can quite conceive that this must have been the way in which Mr. Sterne wrote.

Even as he wrote he was suffering from his health, and that affection in his chest to which he was subject "from the first hour I drew my breath in to this, that I can now scarce draw it at all." A "vile asthma" always tormented him; that periodic breaking of vessels in the lungs was always in ambuscade, as it were, for him. He had been tempted to try Bishop Berkeley's famous and fashionable recipe of tar-water. The year before, one Doctor Wales wrote to a bishop who complained of the difficulty of preaching in a large church, that "tar-water very much deterges and opens the lungs;" and adds that the Bishop of Cloyne's prescription is a quart of common tar stirred in a gallon of water; the dose to be "a fourth of a pint four times a day." Mr. Sterne had tried this nauseous remedy, and writes to a

female correspondent of his, that "it has been of infinite service." He gave a York friend "Berkeley's Querist" and "Swift's Directions to Servants," bound up together; and put in the beginning a humorous inscription:—"Laurence Sterne to . . . with Bp. Berkeley . . . . Going through a course of tar-water for the pleasure committed of sitting up till three in the morning."*

Word, too, had gone forth as to the special character of the work. It had been made a bone of controversy (a sort of food welcome always in a provincial town), and had been condemned beforehand. Nor was it surprising. As originally written it was a purely local satire—levelled at well-known persons in York and Yorkshire. Possibly he meant in this way to retaliate upon Yorick's persecutors. His enemies were not slack upon such an occasion, and it was well understood that he "was busy writing an extraordinary book." He even knew the parties by name who were thus working in the dark. "I shall not," he writes to Mrs. Ferguson, "pick out a jury amongst . . . . . and, till you read my 'Tristram,' do *not, like some* people, condemn it. Laugh, I am sure you will, at some passages." And the "witty widow's" laugh was to be, by-and-by, swelled into a universal mirthful chorus of the whole kingdom.

It is curious that he should not have thought of dedicating his book to some powerful protector, and so turned it to profit in that direction. But there

* This volume is in the possession of Mr. Gray, of York.

was reason for this, in the quaint burlesque upon dedications which he introduced into the body of the work, in which he satirized very severely what might be called the dedication nuisance. Noblemen of the day suffered acutely from this visitation, being stopped by authors as often as they were by highwaymen upon Hounslow. They were mulcted according to their rank, just as they were by servants in the matter of vails. Tristram's comic dedication, therefore, was not likely to be "hawk'd about, or offered publicly or privately to any one," but was honestly "a true virgin dedication;" and as he hated "chaffering and higgling for a few guineas in a dark entry," he was ready to place it at the service of "any one duke, marquis, earl, viscount, or baron, for fifty guineas." Later on, however, when the flush of London triumph came, and a new edition of "Tristram" was getting ready, he found reason to change his mind, and dedicate it, not indeed to the "MOON, who, of all the patrons, or matrons, has most power to set my book a-going," but to a more significant and influential sponsor.

Mention has been made of the rumour that got abroad in the month of November, 1759, to the effect that he was "busy writing an extraordinary book," which shows that the great county of Yorkshire, and the town especially, were watching his motions. It was of interest to them all to know that the witty Prebendary was at work on a comic novel, passages of which had no doubt been read to a few.

Yet if we may trust a curious letter from a friend of his, which stole into a magazine, and which seems to be authentic, these racy passages were written under circumstances of deep domestic trouble. Mrs. Sterne was very ill at the time, having lost her senses by a stroke of palsy, and his daughter Lydia had caught a fever.* This is not so improbable, as she was ailing all her life.

The first instalment—three volumes—was finished before June, 1760; and was to be no exception to the destiny which has waited on the entrance of many famous works into the world. It was to be declined by the publishers. Nor was it surprising. The first instalment of a romance whose hero was not even born at the end of that first instalment, and whose arrival was heralded by a strange and extravagant style, and speculations very diverting but very questionable, did appear to be a perilous venture. In June he wrote up to Dodsley, the great London publisher, offering him the new book for £50, about the sum he would have been glad to receive for the dedication. But the wary publisher declined the unknown work of the obscure Yorkshire Prebendary, saying, "that £50 was too much to risk upon a single volume, which, if it happened not to sell, would be hard upon his brother."

Mr. Sterne acknowledged the justice of this objection in a tone studiously modest, which contrasts amusingly with his later style, and proposed an

* "European Magazine."

arrangement upon a new basis. "You need not be told by me, how much authors are inclined to overrate their own productions. I hope I am an exception." And he then in the same retiring way submits this arrangement to Mr. Dodsley: "I propose therefore to print *a lean edition*, in two small volumes of the size of "Rasselas," and on the same paper and type, at my own expense, merely to feel the pulse of the world, and that I may know what price to set on the remaining volume from the reception of the first. If the "lean edition" (how characteristic this description) should have "the run our critics expect," he proposed following up his success with an instalment every six months.

"If my book fails of success," he goes on, "the loss falls where it ought to do. The same motives which inclined me first to offer you this trifle, incline me to give you the whole profits of the sale (except what Mr. Hinxham sells here, which will be a great many), and to have them sold only at your shop upon the usual terms in these cases."

He will have it printed at York, but "printed so as to do no dishonour to you, who I know never choose to print a book *meanly*." The publisher, too, must have objected that the whole point of the satire was too local. For Mr. Sterne had actually recast this book, cut away all provincial allusions, had made "the satire general, notes are added where wanted, and the whole made more saleable, about 150 pages added; and, to conclude,

a strong interest formed and forming in its behalf."*

It is not known what terms he did eventually make; but it seems likely, from what he wrote to a nameless doctor in the first flush of success, that it was one of those speculative arrangements which are rarely remunerative, except in a burst of triumphant success. He owns that he proposed "laying the world under contribution." And the doctor tells him his book will be read enough "to answer my design of raising a tax upon the public;" which seems to hint that his pecuniary profit was to attend on the sale of the book.

A bookseller, living in Stonegate, close to where Miss Fourmantelle stopped, was to undertake to *exploiter* it in York: "Mr. John Hinxham, successor to the late Mr. Hilyard." And, at the end of December, in the year 1759, the famous romance of "TRISTRAM SHANDY" came out at York.

It took the shape of two miniature pocket volumes, very prettily printed in new type, and on superior paper. It must after all have been printed in London, and by Dodsley's printer,—for the type, paper, and general shape is exactly that of a certain "*Enquiry*" by one Doctor Goldsmith, which was brought out that very year by the same publishers. Mr. Sterne, too, showed his acquaintance with that odd class of eccentric little books, without name, date, or place of publication—the very foundlings of the republic of

* See this curious letter, which embodies the substance of Dodsley's, in Dr. Dibdin's "Reminiscences."

letters,—when he sent forth "Tristram" under such conditions; for the first two volumes show nothing on the title but a curious "colophon" and a date. The price was but five shillings for the two.

It threw York into a commotion. Every one in the cathedral town rushed to buy. Within two days, the bookseller had disposed of two hundred copies, and the demand was still increasing. "The nobility and great folks," wrote Miss Fourmantelle to London, "stand up mightily for it, and say 'tis a good book,"—another illustration of that curious faculty Mr. Sterne possessed of drawing to himself what has been called the cream of the cream of society. From this date he was to be always of that sacred company. Everybody was talking of the "witty smart book;" nor did they find much to object to in the fact, that it was "a little tawdry in some places."

But he was determined that it should have a chance in a far wider sphere. Those who took in the *Publick Advertiser*, up at the great metropolis, read in their number of Tuesday, the first day of the year, a modest advertisement of the new book.

"*This* day," it ran, "is published, printed on superfine writing paper, and a new letter, in two volumes, price 5*s*., neatly bound, 'The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman.' *York*. Printed for and sold by John Hinxham (successor to the late Mr. Hilyard), Bookseller in Stonegate; J. Dodsley, in Pall-mall; and Mr. Cooper, in Paternoster-row, London; and by all the book-

sellers in Great Britain and Ireland." And this notice appeared but once or twice.

He was not content to trust to so simple a means of notoriety as this. On the last day of the year there was a concert at the York Assembly Rooms, at which were the "nobility and great folks," and the brilliant Prebendary himself, no doubt receiving all the earlier fruits of local success. There, too, he met the young French *émigrée* lady, Miss Fourmantelle, and talked with her over the triumph of the new book, and told how he had sent up some copies to London. And the next day, the young French lady sat down and wrote to an influential London friend, a letter, whereof the text was the new book, pure and simple.

The London friend is entreated to get it and to read it, and, above all, to praise it *partout*, because his "good word in town will do the author, I am sure, great service." She owns that the "graver people say, 'tis not fit for young ladies to read, so perhaps you'll think it not fit for a young lady to recommend." She then tells him, it is by a person whose name is Sterne, and praises him as "a gentleman of great preferment, and has a great character in these parts as a man of learning and wit." She half apologises for this warm advocacy, by adding that "he is a kind and generous friend of mine, whom Providence has attached to me in this part of the world, where I came a stranger; and I could not think how I could make a better return than by endeavouring to make you a friend to him and his performance.

This is all my excuse for this liberty, which I hope you will excuse." In short, a prettily-written lady's letter.

But now follows a true Shandean discovery. There has been found among this young lady's papers a draft of this very London letter, in the actual handwriting of "the great character in those parts as a man of learning and wit"! The clever Mr. Sterne had written for the young French lady what she was to send to her friend!

The book, however, was not to need such helps. It does not, indeed, seem certain that the "run" began at once, or, indeed, until Mr. Sterne himself came up to town in March; for it is not until the month of April that notices of its enthusiastic reception, then rife, are dropped in letters from London to the country. The second edition, too, was not out until the middle of the year, which, by a sort of rough calculation, would make the really serious demand about the month of March. A month's "rush for copies" would exhaust a small edition in these days; and in the memoir which appeared when Mr. Sterne first came upon town, it is stated that only a few copies were sent up to London at first, so little anticipation was there of anything like a serious demand at Mr. Dodsley's establishment.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SEVENTH.

PETTY ANNOYANCES.

In the month of November, before his book appeared, he had taken a house "in the Minster-yard" for his wife and daughter, in order that the latter, being now some twelve years old, might have the advantage of such masters in the accomplishments as York could afford. She was to begin dancing forthwith. Mr. Sterne said if he could not give her a fortune, she should at least have a suitable education. Still, for all this hint at want of means, it is plain that he was in the habit of treating himself to visits to London, and had fixed an expedition for the March of the following year, as soon as the labour of publishing "Tristram" should have been off his hands.

It had been scarcely in the hands of the York lieges a month before the personalities, fancied or real, began to bear awkward fruit. He was worried by letters of expostulation, and a tide of good advice flowed in upon him from well-meaning friends. The *genus irritabile* of "our Sydenhams and Sangrados" were specially sore. A strange passage in the first volume, which has hopelessly mystified

readers, was in that day perfectly intelligible, and resented. Did not Dr. Kunastrokius," he writes, "that great man, at his leisure hours, take the greatest delight imaginable in combing of asses' tails, and plucking the dead hairs out with his teeth, though he had tweezers always in his pockets?" This, it seems, was pointed at the celebrated Doctor Mead, whose intellects wandered a little at the close of his life, and whose malady took the shape of violent senile attachments. He was then in the habit of sitting for hours together combing the back hair of his "flames," and picking out the short hairs with his teeth. "This curious weakness," says Mr. Sterne in one of his letters, "was known by every chambermaid and footman within the bills of mortality." But until the present time neither footman, nor chambermaid, nor reader, nor professional critic, has conceived the true solution.*

There happened to be two country practitioners down in Mr. Sterne's neighbourhood who had been married to daughters of the famous physician; and charitable fingers speedily pointed out to them the passage in the new book reflecting on their relation. These gentlemen, however, were not too sensitive; and it was stated in the London papers that "they were no champions for his foible, and could meet Yorick without reproaches or blushings." But an

* Oddly enough, Archenholtz, a German, who travelled in England towards the end of the last century, mentions gravely that he had heard that such was a common pastime of the nobility.

indignant doctor, a personal friend of Mr. Sterne, wrote promptly to protest against this outrage on the dead; for Doctor Mead was already gathered to his fathers. He insisted in many letters on the maxim, *De mortuis*, &c., and even hinted at "cowardice;" and to him the author wrote an indignant justification of many pages, half serious, and altogether Shandean. Never was the charitable maxim refuted so pleasantly, which he describes as "a nonsensical lullaby of some nurse put into Latin by some pedant, to be chanted by some hypocrites to the end of the world." The ruling passion is the special mark of character, and he "would as soon leave out a man's head as his hobby-horse." But "'tis not courage," says the doctor, "to attack a dead man who can't defend himself;" to which he most ingeniously *ripostes*, "Why do you doctors of the faculty attack such a one with your incision knife?" a turn which might have been one of the retrenched passages of "Tristram."

This medical friend, who writes from London, good-naturedly lets his clerical friend in the provinces know "the general opinion of the best judges, without exception" upon his book, which is to the effect "that it cannot be put into the hands of any woman of character;" a verdict perfectly just in the abstract, but which, taken in reference to the tone of society then prevailing, was scarcely a fair criticism; for it was notorious that it was in the hands of the class that would *now* be considered women of character and propriety. Mr. Sterne

insists that this view is taken merely from the "little world of your acquaintance," which it most likely was. "I hope," adds Mr. Sterne, "you except widows, doctor, for they are not all so squeamish; but I am told they are all really of my party, in return for some good offices done their interests in the 176th page of my second volume (he was here thinking of Mrs. Ferguson, "my witty widow"); . . . "but for the chaste married, and chaste unmarried, they must not read my book. God take them under his protection in this fiery ordeal, and send us plenty of duennas to watch the workings of their humours till they have safely got through the whole work." The London doctor owned, a little grudgingly, that the book would be read enough "to answer my design of raising a tax upon the public." This was just at the commencement of the month of February; so that "*would* be read enough" was yet to come. Still he was not yet done with the doctors. Through the whole of that letter runs an *aigre* wounded tone, a vehemence of self-defence, which shows, in spite of his careless assumption of indifference, how acutely he felt the storm of local criticism his satire had raised up. This personality, real or fancied, subjected him to a persecution almost whimsical in its incidents.

The picture of Doctor Slop was at once appropriated by nearly every sensitive Sangrado in the district; and the luckless author was waited on by injured members of the faculty, and called on with remonstrances, and even threats, to alter the per-

sonal strokes and colouring of his portrait. The "ingenious Doctor Burton," at whom the wicked sketch was said to be aimed, boldly disclaimed all consciousness of any resemblance in the picture to him; and thus extricated himself out of the difficulty. But there were others scarcely so politic. An amusing interview is said to have taken place between the author and one of the injured guild. The latter complained bitterly of "the indecent liberties" that had been taken with his character and person.

"Are you," asked Mr. Sterne very calmly, "a man-midwife?"

"No," the medical remonstrant was constrained to answer.

"Are you a Roman Catholic?"

"No."

"Were you ever splashed and dirtied?"

"Yes," answered the other eagerly; "and that is the very thing you have taken advantage of to expose me."*

This was truly comic and Shandean, and must have amused Yorick wonderfully. But he composed his face, and strove, with all gentleness, to reason his visiter out of the notion that any offence was intended. Finding, however, that this course had no effect, he is said to have dismissed the sensitive mediciner with this quiet caution:—

"Sir, I have not hurt you. But take care; *I am*

* See the memoir in the "Royal Female Magazine" for 1760.

not born yet, and you cannot know what I may do in the next two volumes."

A little bit of terrorism which, no doubt, freed him from his persecutors. Friends, too, were alarmed at this new and dangerous line, which bid fair to alienate friends and raise up enemies, and wrote him earnest remonstrances, hinting at other directions for his talents. The steady circuit of politics was more secure and more certain of profit, and will help to put by that "nummum in loculo," or balance at banker's, which is so comforting a support. "But," said Mr. Sterne in reply—with an earnestness which we may accept as genuine, allowing a little margin for the theatrical warmth and self-satisfaction with which such declarations are made—"I thank God, though I don't abound, that I have enough for a clean shirt every day, and a mutton-chop; and my contentment with this has thus far (and I hope ever will) *put me above stooping an inch for it.* For estate—curse on it—I like it not to that degree, nor envy (*you may be sure*) *any man who kneels in the dirt for it.*"

And it must be said, in justice to Mr. Sterne, that to this creed he was constant all through his life; this, too, in an age when such prostration in the dirt was very plentiful. He also supplements this by a declaration, which we may also accept as sincere, as to "the ends proposed in commencing author;" which were—first, the hope of doing the world good by ridiculing what I thought deserving of it, or of disservice to sound learning;" and,

secondly, "I wrote not to be *fed*, but to be *famous*." Both ends were fortunately attained. His purse was handsomely lined in the same proportion as his fame extended.

A clerical friend also wrote to him nervously, about the irregular character of the new book. Mr. Fothirgill, a brother functionary of the cathedral, preached daily to him on the same text. "Get your preferment first," said this clergyman, taking what was certainly not very high moral ground, "*and then write and welcome*." All, however, pressed on him the necessity of a certain amount of castration, in case the book should run to a second edition. To these well-meant remonstrances he answered very patiently, promised some excisions—will "use all reasonable caution, but so as not to spoil my book; that is, the air and originality of it, which must resemble the author." And another clergyman, "a very able critic," endorsed this view heartily, adding forcibly that "that idea in his head would render the book not worth a groat." He denied with reason that he had gone as far as Swift. "He keeps a due distance from Rabelais, and I keep a due distance from him." Still he was a good deal scared, and was inclined to give way. He tells his London medical friend, that the propriety of alteration is even then (30th January) *sub judice*. He has even been driven to the project of getting his book put into the hands of his Archbishop, "if he comes down this summer." But, in truth, it was hard for him

to know what to do; for were there not "men of wit" and "sound critics," "relishing" most the very passages for whose suppression the more moral were clamouring? No wonder that, harassed in this fashion, he should own to being barely above the level of despair.

Had he but known what episcopal support he was hereafter to acquire, he, perhaps, would not have lost a moment in placing it in his Archbishop's hands. That prelate had yet to be told, by a brother prelate, that he had the English Rabelais in his diocese. His friends, however, stood firmly by him, encouraged him, and, with a few exceptions, even added to the flattering opinion they had originally entertained of his work.

There is one bit of consolation to cheer him. Even at this early date, before the book had time to make its way fairly, the most skilful actor of the day had penetration enough to discern its great and eccentric merits. The famous manager and actor had read it, and was, no doubt, taken by its wonderfully dramatic character. His "favourable opinion" was promptly transmitted to the author, though with a certain ungraciousness; the candid friend who reported it to Mr. Sterne hinting, that "he had done better in finding fault with it than in commending it."

For these injudicious but well-meant remonstrances, which certainly took a rough and churlish shape, the country parson was presently—sooner indeed than he or the remonstrants were dreaming

of—to have satisfactory indemnity. "Tristram Shandy" was now in the hands of the great public of London. Persons were ordering it from their booksellers; and the author—it being now close on the month of March, 1760—was packing his mails to go up to London.

Hitherto he had not lived for the world. Neither had the men and women of fashion, nor the world of metropolitan politics, nor indeed any of the great collected coteries, which confer degrees and make reputations, bestowed a thought upon the obscure Yorkshire cleric. Now all is about to be changed. Now, as he said in one of his sermons, "the whole drama is opened"—the splendid glories of success, and of London homage, are waiting for him.

APPENDIX.

A.

ARCHBISHOP STERNE'S "DELIVERANCE."—VOL. I. p. 69.

"At another time, playing near a mill, he fell within a dow: there was but one board or bucket wanting in the whole wheel, but a gracious Providence so ordered it, that the void place came down at that moment, else he had been inevitably crushed to death, but was reserved to be a grand benefactor afterwards."—*Thoresby*, ii., 15.

B.

DR. STERNE "ATTENDED LAUD ON THE SCAFFOLD."—VOL. I. p. 13.

"He had petitioned, too, that his chaplains, Doctors Sterne, Heywood, and Martin, would be allowed to attend him, which was also in part refused. Dr. Sterne was permitted: but two Presbyterian enthusiasts, Marshall and Palmer, were deputed to tender to him their peculiar consolations, which he nobly declined.

"After these devotions, the Archbishop arose, and gave his papers to Dr. Sterne, his chaplain, who accompanied

him to the scaffold, saying, 'Doctor, I give you this, that you may show it to your fellow-chaplains,'" &c., &c. —*Life and Times of Archbishop Laud,* vol. ii., 497, A.D. 1644-5.

C.

RICHARD STERNE, OF KILVINGTON.—VOL. I. p. 26.

"Feb. 19th.—Up pretty timely, preparing for a journey, and somewhat concerned about company, fearful of being confined to a coach for so many days with unsuitable persons, and not one I know of. At Streethouse, took up a gentleman and his man, who proved very good company (not so hot as I feared, being the Archbishop's son), Richard Sterne, Esqr., Parliamentman for Ripon."—*Diary of Ralph Thoresby,* vol. i., p. 154, A.D. 1683.

END OF VOL. I.

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